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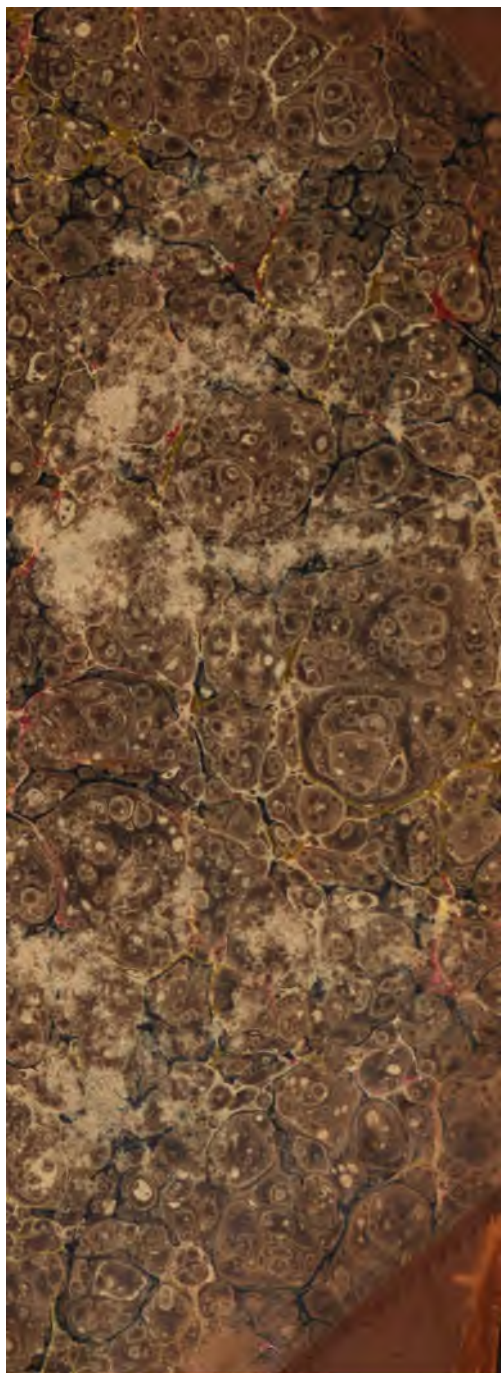
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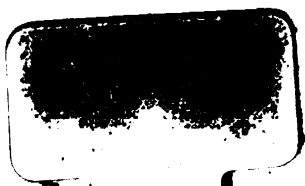


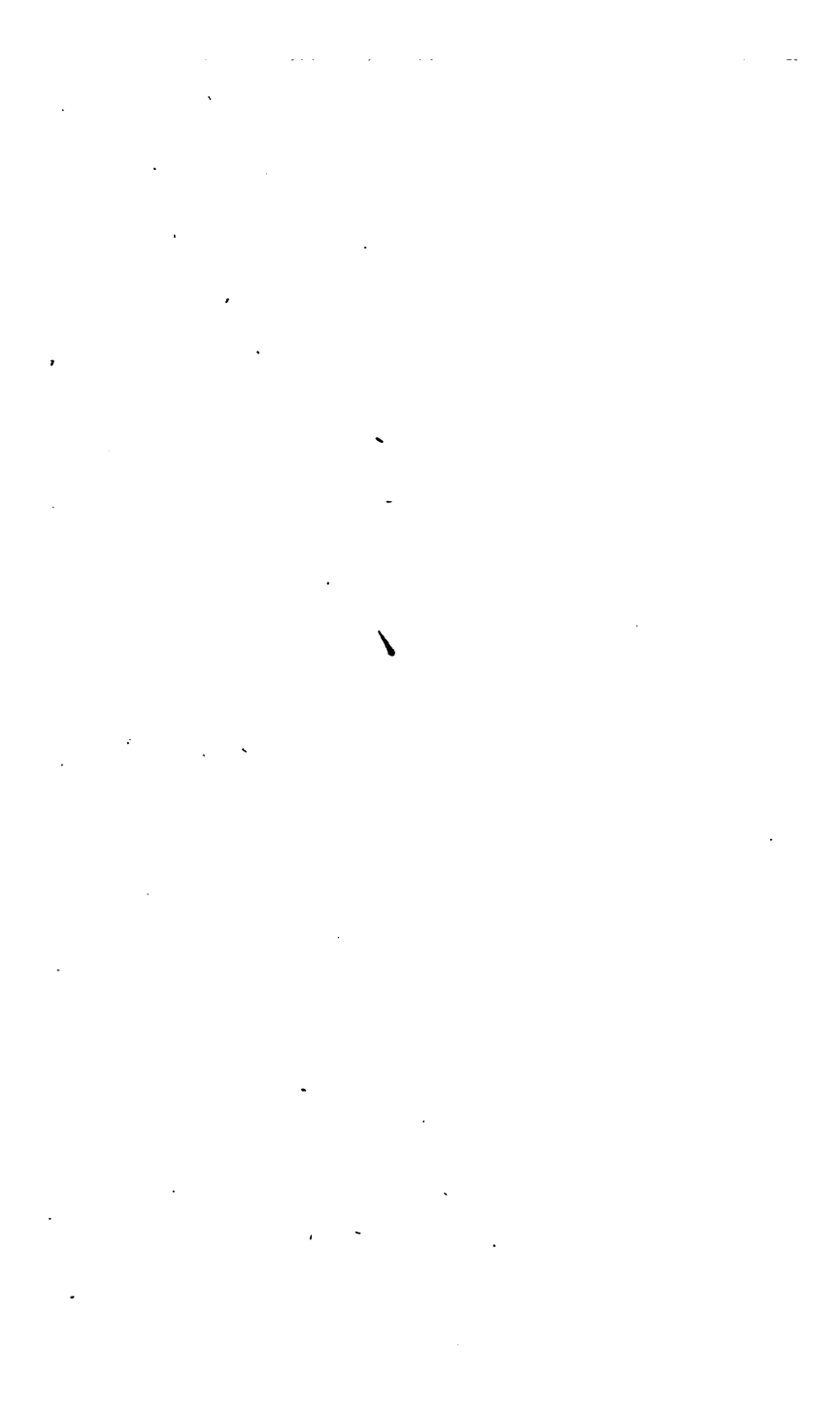




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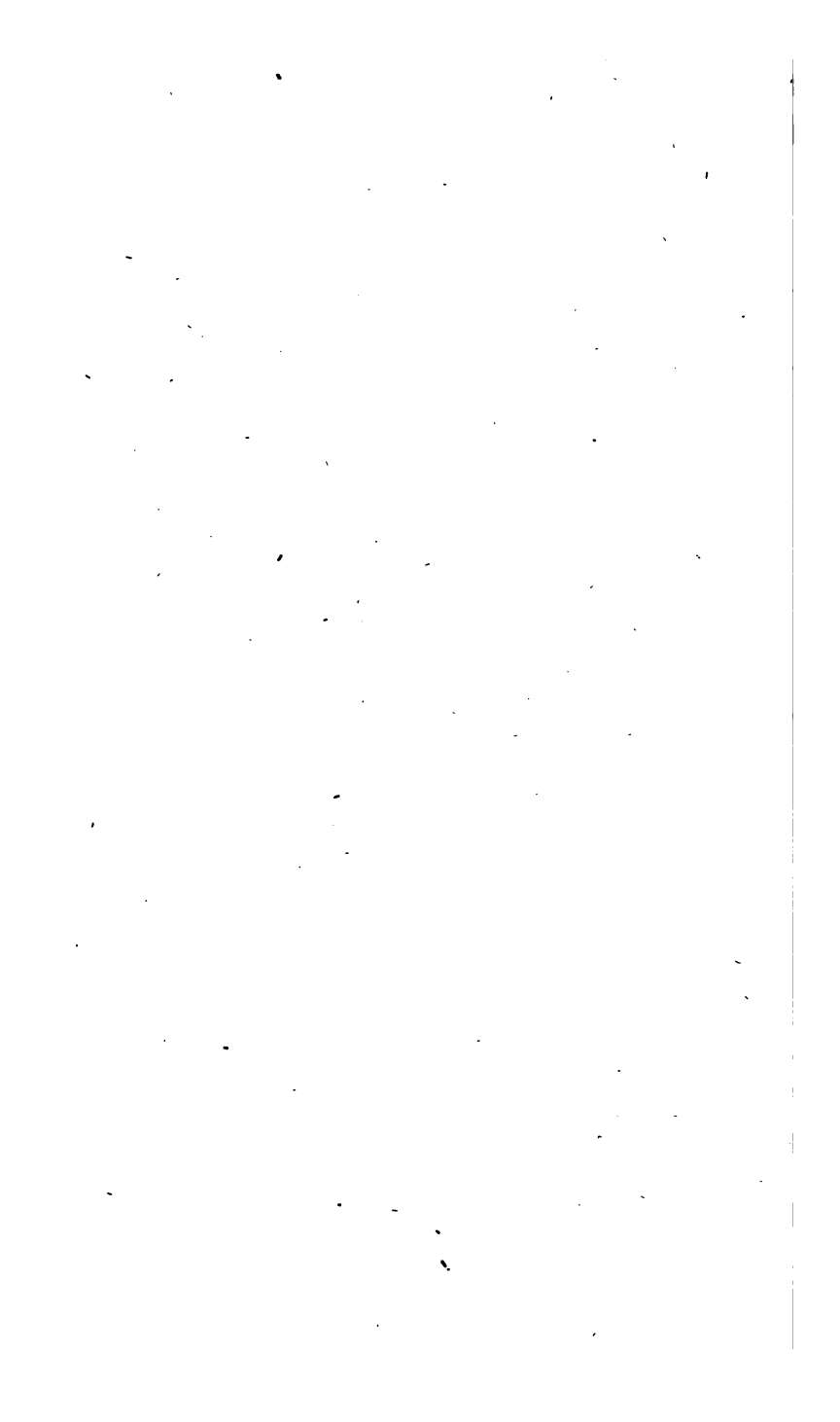
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*v. S. H. 1827.*  
**PLAIN**

# **DISCOURSES**

**ON**

**EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL**

**CHRISTIANITY.**

---

**BY THE REV.**

**WILLIAM FORD VANCE, A.M.**

**ASSISTANT CURATE OF ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW.**

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**LONDON:**

**JAMES NISBET, BERNERS STREET.**

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**DENNETT, PRINTER, LEATHER LANE.**

TO THE  
REV. CHARLES JERRAM, A.M.  
VICAR OF CHOBHAM,  
AND HIS PARISHIONERS.

---

My Dear Sir, and Respected Friends,

I TRUST you will excuse me for taking the liberty of dedicating to you this little Volume, with the contents of which you are already familiar : but I could not resist the desire I felt, thus publicly to express my gratitude for the very uncommon and unlooked for kindness, which I and my family have experienced from you, ever since I had the happiness of being connected with you in the capacity of Curate. Though that connexion has now ceased, yet the grateful feelings associated with the recollection of it will only cease with life.



For as long as life and memory last, I trust that I shall ever retain a lively sense of the obligations I am under to my kind friends in Chobham and its vicinity.\*

With sincere prayers for your spiritual and temporal welfare, I remain,

My Dear Friends,

Your obliged and Faithful Servant,

WILLIAM FORD VANCE.

*London, April 20th, 1827.*

\* Since the above was written, the author has been informed that one of those kind friends here alluded to, has been removed to the world of spirits. We have good reason to believe that she is gone to take her place among that blessed company who have "*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" But her loss will be deeply felt, and her memory long respected, by the poor of Chobham, of whom she was the munificent benefactress.

## PREFACE.



CIRCUMSTANCES which it is unnecessary to specify have led to the publication of the following Discourses; but they were not originally intended to meet the critic's eye, and will, probably, be found to contain in them nothing either very new or very ingenious. They are, strictly speaking, "Plain Discourses," adapted to a congregation which required rather to be "*built up in the faith*," than to be instructed in the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ."\* They are a few, out of many, of which the author can say with truth,

\* They were originally preached in the parish church of Chobham, Surrey; and afterwards, with some alteration, to the afternoon congregation of St. John's; both which places have been long highly favoured with the ministry of the late Mr. Cecil and his respected successors.

that they cost him some labour and much prayer. He has endeavoured to adhere faithfully to the "Word of God" in composing them. And he now offers them to the Christian Reader, in the language of St. Peter, My Brother, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee," and may the Lord bless it to thy soul. Amen.

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- Page 6, line 1, *for* desarts, *read* deserts  
60, 5 from bottom, *for* that be ye not, *read* that ye be  
not  
61, 2, *for* words, *read* declaration  
116, 13, *for* passes, *read* passes  
151, 5 from bottom, *insert* to *before* repent  
166, 5 from bottom, *for* had, *read* have  
173, 13, *for* desarts, *read* deserts  
202, 15, *for* multitude, *read* multitude  
256, 10 from bottom, *omit* us  
261, 4 from bottom, *for* unditiful, *read* undutiful  
291, in the Text: *for* covenant (twice occurring), *read*  
Testament  
313, last line, *insert* ; *after* righteousness, *instead of* .

## SERMON I.

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN'S  
PORTION AND THAT OF THE MEN OF THIS  
WORLD.

PSALM CXIX. 57.

*Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I  
would keep thy words.*

**H**APPY is the man to whom these words of the Psalmist are applicable! Yea, blessed is he who is able to say from his heart, "Thou art my portion, O Lord." The habitual feelings of such a man must be the most comfortable that it is possible to imagine; seeing that no matter what may be his situation or circumstances in this world; no matter how poor or contemptible he may seem in all outward appearance; he yet possesses within his own bosom a never-failing source of peace and satisfaction, to which the people of this world are strangers; the consciousness, namely, that he has "God for his portion, and the Holy One of Jacob for his inheritance." These words of David suggest to us,

my Beloved Brethren, *two* subjects for devout meditation: *First*, the enquiry, What it means to have God for our portion; and, *Secondly*, What kind of a portion He is. And may He Himself be graciously pleased to bless the subject to the edification of all our souls!

In the first place I say, the words of our text suggest to us the enquiry,—What it means to have the Lord for our portion: and this the very words themselves assist in explaining to us. The term ‘portion,’ we know, signifies a *possession*; or, more strictly, that share of a parent’s property which falls to the lot of each of his children. Thus the prodigal son, when about to leave his father’s house, said to him, “Father, give me the *portion* of goods that falleth to me; and he divided unto them his living.” Now it is declared in the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, (ver. 9.) that “the Lord’s portion is His people;” that means, ‘He hath chosen them unto Himself through faith and the sanctification of His spirit unto obedience,’ to be His own property, His own “*peculiar people*,” in whom He takes delight, and in whose lives He will be glorified: according as it is written in Psalm iv. 3. “Know ye not that the Lord hath set apart *him that is godly* unto Himself.” And this, be it remembered, He had a right to do; forasmuch as not only their creation, but also their redemption, were altogether His own work; and He had, as Immanuel

or "God in Christ," purchased them unto Himself "with the price of His own precious blood;" as St. Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "Ye are not your own, but ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and spirits, which are *His*." Hence we learn, my Beloved Brethren, *that if we are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are His own special property* by right of redemption or purchase—"He having given his life for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And not only so, but in this case the Lord is also *our* portion. It is our privilege to be assured of this, though we may sometimes feel tempted to doubt it. '*Our faith working by love*' to our covenant God and Saviour, gives us a mutual interest or property in one another, according to the terms of the new covenant, as revealed in Jer. xxxii. 38. "*They shall be My people, and I will be their God:*" and this mutual property which the Lord and His faithful people possess in one another, is best illustrated by the favourite comparison of a husband and wife. God in Christ is, we find, repeatedly set forth in Scripture as the *husband* or *bridegroom* of His believing people. Thus in Hosea ii. 19, 20, He is represented as saying to them, "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto Me

in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." And again, in Jer. iii. 14. "Behold I am married unto thee, saith the Lord of Hosts." It follows, therefore, that as on the one hand we are *His* property, in the same sense that the wife is the property of her husband, so on the other hand, He is *our* property, in the same sense that the husband is the property of his wife. And this is beautifully signified to us in the language with which the church is represented as a bride addressing her spouse, in Canticles ii. 16. where she says, "My beloved is *mine*, and I am *his*," which assurance it is the privilege of all to experience, whose consciences testify that they are sincerely trusting to the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that they have made choice of His love and His service in preference to all other objects; and that they are following him in the way of cordial though imperfect obedience to all his commandments.

Having thus discovered in what respects it may be said, *generally*, that the Lord is the portion of his faithful people, let us next, my Beloved Brethren, proceed to consider *what kind of a portion he is*. In demonstration of which I shall endeavour to shew you, first, that the Lord is an *all-sufficient* portion; secondly, that He is a *sure* portion; and thirdly, that He is an *eternal* portion.

First, we shall find that the Lord is the all-sufficient portion of His people; that is, He is all-suffi-

cient for their *happiness*. They who have God for their portion need no other; for no 'good thing can they want' who have Him for their friend and supporter. This is a subject of much exultation and self congratulation with David, in the 16th Psalm, where he says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."—And that the Lord must indeed be a "*goodly heritage*" to those who are so unspeakably happy as to possess Him, is obvious for many reasons; but for this above all, that He is the Author and Giver of all good, Himself, "the good Supreme." His love (as the church says in Cant. iv. 10.) is *better than wine*;" sweeter to the hearts of those who enjoy it than the most luxurious delicacies or costly viands, which soon satiate and pall upon the taste. "His loving-kindness (as David says in Psalm lxiii. 3.) is *better than life*," because it is the only thing which makes life supportable to a pious and reflecting mind. For what, let me ask, would this life be to us, my Christian Brethren, without the favour or blessing of Almighty God? Would it not be indeed a dry and barren wilderness, devoid of light, hope, peace, and every thing desirable? Would it not answer the description which Jeremiah gives of the wilderness through which the children of Israel passed, on their way to Canaan—

"A land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death!" Verily, my dear Brethren, even reason itself suffices to convince us, that without the favour and blessing of our Creator, existence itself must be a curse. And no matter what abundance we may enjoy of the good things of this world; no matter how wealthy, how honourable, how wise, or how happy we may be in all human estimation; if we do not possess the blessing of God, it would have been better for us (as Job says of himself) that we had never been born. But if we *do* possess this inestimable treasure, we are rich indeed. If the Lord be our portion, we have in Him every thing that makes life desirable. If He be our Shepherd, we shall not want. He will make us lie down in green pastures, He will lead us beside the still waters, He will restore our souls to spiritual health, and lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. As the poet sweetly says, in his beautiful address to the Creator—

"From thee, in all that soothes the life of man,  
His high endeavour and his glad success,  
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.  
But oh, thou bounteous Giver of all good,  
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown;  
Give what thou wilt, without Thee we are poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

CONGRAT.

In a word, if God be our portion, i. e. if we so believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as to feel His Love “shed abroad upon our hearts,” we may be said in Him to possess an abundance of meat, drink, houses, lands, money, friends; in short, every thing that is really necessary or useful for us: because all these things are His own gift, He knows how far we have need of them, and He has promised in his holy word to bestow these things on His faithful people, in as large a measure as He sees essential to their temporal and eternal happiness. As it is written, Psalm cxlv. 19. “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him, He will also hear their cry and will help them.” And again, (Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9.) “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thine house, and Thou shalt make them to drink of the river of Thy pleasures; for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.” It is for this reason that the Psalmist says of himself, Psalm iv. “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou *hast put gladness in mine heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine and oil increased.*”

How different this from the feelings and language of the people of the world, whom David describes as “having *their portion in this life*,” and whose highest happiness consists in possessing an abundance of such things as gratify “the lust of



the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life!" This is a portion, my Beloved Brethren, which cannot possibly satisfy the immortal soul, and they who possess no other than this, are, and must ever be, more or less discontented with their condition; always desiring and seeking after something new to appease the insatiable cravings of their souls. Thus the man whose portion is his money cannot be satisfied without endeavouring to obtain more of it. The votaries of pleasure and fashionable dissipation are continually sighing after fresh sources of enjoyment, and are the prey of discontent and *ennui* until they have discovered some. The wise man feels his knowledge to be imperfect and unsatisfactory, and every new acquisition only increases his eagerness for more. And the ambitious man cannot rest happy without making additions to his power and reputation. Thus we find, that *even by their own confession* the portions of the men of this world are far from satisfactory. Weariness, disappointment, and satiety are inseparable from their most valued enjoyments. Each thinks his neighbour's lot in some respect preferable to his own. The eye is not satisfied with continually seeing the most beautiful objects, nor the ear with hearing the most delightful sounds. These are "broken cisterns, which can hold no water;" these are *miserable comforters*, which may for a short time gratify the sense, but

can afford no consolation to the wounded spirit or the broken heart. But God in Christ is the Fountain of living waters, from Whose fulness all His faithful people are privileged to drink daily to the satisfying of their souls. All the believer's fresh springs of peace and consolation are in Him, and flow from Him in a continual stream, "making glad the city of God." And while worldly men and nominal Christians, who "have their portion only in this life," are always wishing something in it to be different from what it is—wearied with the same dull repetition of unsatisfying pleasures, and eagerly flying from one place to another in the vain pursuit of happiness—The people of God, whose hopes and desires centre *in Him*, and whose only expectations of happiness are *from Him*, need never be at a loss for consolation: for either in public or private communion with Him, meditating upon His redeeming love, resting upon His promises, attending upon His ordinances, or engaged in His active service; they are privileged to enjoy that "Peace which passeth understanding," which this world can neither give nor take away. "Peace I leave with you," He says to us, "My peace I give unto you, *not as the world giveth* give I unto you, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Again. The Lord is not only the all-sufficient portion of His people, but He is moreover their *sure* portion. In this respect, also, there is a vast dif-

ference between the portions of worldly men and that of the true believer. For even admitting that the share of good things which the men of this world possess was *satisfactory*, (which experience proves that it is not,) still, even by their own confession, it is not *sure* to them. Granting for a moment that their money, their pleasures, their wisdom, and their dignities, were sufficient to make their possessors happy, which is contrary to fact, still they themselves are compelled to acknowledge that none of these things are certain to them, not even for an hour. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? Who knoweth what changes a few weeks or months may produce in his circumstances? Who can be sure how long he may retain those possessions which he now so fondly idolizes? Riches "make to themselves wings and flee away." Every day serves to verify David's words, "that men heap up money without being able to tell who shall gather it." The failure of a Bank, the burning of a house, the loss of a ship, the treachery of a servant, the ingenuity of a thief, may and frequently does strip the wealthy worldling of all his darling treasure, and reduce him, like Job, from the pinnacle of earthly prosperity to the lowest extreme of poverty and wretchedness; and then what is to become of him, or whither is he to turn for consolation?

The same may be said of Pleasure; not merely

criminal pleasure, but that which the world calls innocent. Take it at best, it is confessedly an uncertain thing, which derives its power to gratify from circumstances over which we have no controul, and which are perpetually changing; so that the same thing that affords us pleasure to-day, will perhaps fail to gratify us to-morrow. Is not this the fact, my Brethren? Are not even the most innocent enjoyments which this life affords us as uncertain as they are unsatisfactory? Take, for instance, the most allowable and delightful of all earthly gratifications, *the endearments of friendship, and the society of those we love*. Is this certain to us? A voice from the grave answers—No! The cries of the widowed wife, the orphan child, the parent bereaved of his offspring, and bringing down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; the lamentations of those whose hearts, like David and Jonathan, were knit together in the tenderest affection, but whom a cruel fortune has doomed never to meet again—All these, I say, loudly proclaim that the sweetest pleasures which this life affords are transient and uncertain, and that if we have no better portion than these, we are very miserable creatures; for quickly do they pass away, and prove themselves to be all in the end, but “Vanity and Vexation of spirit!”

Whither, then, my dear Brethren, shall we turn for *certain* peace and consolation? Shall we turn to

*Grandeur*? Ah! this is but cold comfort to its possessor—the gaudy, unsubstantial pageant of a dream—which for a few moments intoxicates the senses with its deceitful glitter, but quickly ends in weariness and disgust. Shall we then turn to *Fame*? What is this but the breath of an ignorant multitude, which the first blast of calumny or misfortune is sure to dissipate! Or to *Knowledge*? Alas! this too is an uncertain portion to its possessor; for besides that the “Wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,” and that we can never arrive at perfect truth or certainty where we can only see the *outside* of things; even the very knowledge which we *do* possess is not sure to us a moment. Like all other things, its power to please *depends upon the state of our health and spirits*; and as any of those accidents or grievous diseases to which we are daily liable, may suddenly reduce the proudest and most prosperous, like Naaman the leper, to such a state of suffering as no earthly good can mitigate; so also an attack of palsy, or of madness, may in a moment obliterate every trace of intellect, and reduce the wisest of men to the condition of an idiot, or of the beasts that have no understanding. And oh, my Beloved Brethren, what can we conceive more deplorable than the condition of that individual, “whose only portion was in this life,” whose highest happiness, while in health, consisted in the enjoyment of his money,

his pleasures, his dignities, or his wisdom, but who, when visited by pain of body, or disease of mind, has *no higher resources*, but lies helpless and groaning upon his bed of torment, a miserable spectacle of vanity and wretchedness—a melancholy monument of the uncertainty and worthlessness of the good things of this world!

How far different the lot of him who has the Lord, the immutable Jehovah, for his portion!—*He* builds his happiness upon a sure foundation, even upon the promises of Him who is the “rock of ages”—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” Who says to his believing people, “*I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.*” His chief consolation is derived, not from the fleeting perishing things of time and sense, but from the “*everlasting covenant*” of grace, sealed with the blood of the Son of God, and of which the Lord Jehovah speaks, by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, (liv. ch. 10. v.) “*Though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee.*” This “covenant of peace,” confirmed to us by the immutable purpose and oath of God, who cannot lie, is, I say, the *sure* portion of all who truly believe in the Gospel of his dear Son. For, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord

Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received the atonement." "In Him God is manifested, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us." And if we, my Beloved Brethren, have, by a true faith in His Word applied this Covenant of peace and reconciliation to our own hearts, we are in possession of a secret source of happiness and consolation, of which nothing can ever deprive us. Yea, even though our own views and apprehensions of it may *vary*, yet the covenant itself *varieth not*. It is "*ordered in all things and sure*." "My covenant," saith God, "will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips." And "This is the covenant,—I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Thus we have, as the Apostle says, *strong consolation* if we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the Gospel covenant. Our God is at peace with us. He has promised that His loving kindness and tender mercy shall *never* depart from us. No matter what misfortunes may befall us in this life, His love for us is always the same. We cannot want a Parent, when we have God for our father. We cannot want a Friend, if we have the Son of God for our brother. We cannot be poor, if we are possessed of the "*unsearchable riches of His grace*." We cannot be called unhappy, so long as we are able to look up-

ward, and say with Jeremiah, in the midst of his afflictions, "*The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore my hope is in him.*"

Thus it is that, as Solomon says, "*The good man is satisfied from himself,*" i. e. He possesses an un-failing source of satisfaction in his own bosom, to which the men of this world are strangers. And herein are verified the words of David, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress; and my deliverer, my God, in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. And, again, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; yea, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation."*

And this leads us, my Brethren, in the last place, to consider that the Lord is the *eternal* portion of His faithful people. This is the widest and most important distinction of all, between true believers and the men of this world. For their portion is not only unsatisfactory and uncertain while it lasts,



but it is also necessarily of short duration. The only thing certain beneath the sun, is Death; and "when a man dies, he can carry nothing away with him." Naked came he into the world, and naked must he leave it. Therefore, even admitting that while men were alive, they possessed every thing that heart could wish, and that, like Dives "they were clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;" still what does all this profit them when they come to their death-bed; where all those things which constituted their happiness in this world, must for ever be given up! When they must bid an eternal adieu to their money, their pleasures, their friends, their dignities; and exchange them all, *for what?* Oh! This is a fearful question to those who "have their portion only in this world." This is an awful consideration for those who have only been careful to "lay up treasure on earth, without being rich toward God." Even on the infidel's principles of annihilation, or non-existence after death, the dreary blackness of the tomb presents a frightful prospect when contrasted with those enjoyments which they must for ever renounce. But when we call to mind the awful truth, that "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that *the judgment*"—When we reflect upon our Lord's twice-repeated declaration, that "Verily, verily, except a man be born again

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—We see the condition of worldly and unregenerate men exhibited in still more alarming colours, and cannot avoid calling to remembrance the account which our Lord gives of the rich man in the parable, who when he lifted up his eyes in torment, and begged a moment's alleviation of his misery, received for answer, "Son, remember that thou *in thy life time received thy good things*, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and *thou art tormented*."

Now this enables us to understand more clearly the blessedness of those who have the Lord for their portion. *Their's* is a portion that *lasts for ever*. In choosing his redeeming love and favour, as the one thing needful to their souls, they have, like Mary, "chosen that good part which shall never be taken from them." This is a portion, my Christian brethren, of which even death itself has no power to deprive us; for He in whom we trust is Himself "the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me (he says) though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die!" Glorious words! Containing in them a fund of consolation to the believer's soul, in comparison with which the most excellent things that this world can bestow appear unspeakably worthless and contemptible. Thus we learn that the true Christian is not only rich in this life, but

also in that which is to come. His possessions and prospects are not circumscribed by the narrow limits of human existence. The tenure by which he holds his happiness is not liable to be broken by the stroke that separates soul from body. In calling God his own, he can call *eternity his own* also. He can stand upon the ruins of the creation, and say, "I have lost nothing." The instant that he quits this transitory scene he enters upon possession of a Heavenly inheritance—Of treasures incorruptible—Of a crown of glory that never fadeth—Of pure celestial joys that never satiate—And the society and friendship of congenial spirits, from whom he shall never be separated. Thus, even in the agonies of death, the man who has the Lord for his portion may adopt the triumphant language of the Psalmist, (Psalm lxxiii,) and say to his Heavenly Friend, "I am continually with thee, and thou hast holden me by my right hand; Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me into glory; Whom have I in heaven, O Lord, but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and *my portion for ever.*"

May the consideration of these things, my Beloved Brethren, stir us up to serious self-examination and diligent enquiry whether the Lord be our portion or not! For of this we may be sure,

that if He is not our portion in this world; He certainly will not be so in the world to come. And if God be not our portion in the next world, what have we to expect throughout eternity? What are our prospects when we leave this world, (which we cannot tell how soon we may be called to do,) if we have taken no pains to secure the love and favour of Almighty God, or to lay up for our souls a heavenly inheritance? Are we rich? Is our lot cast amongst the great ones and the prosperous ones of this earth? Let us beware lest this be our *only* portion. It will signify little to us on the great day of retribution, how much of this world's goods we possessed, if we are for ever excluded from the presence of our God, and have our eternal portion allotted to us with the devil and his angels, in that place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! Are we poor? To the poor especially the gospel is preached: if we have but a small share of the good things of this world, we should be the more anxious to secure for ourselves an eternal inheritance in the world to come.

Finally. Let us all apply the Psalmist's words to ourselves, and compare his language with the feelings of our own hearts. "Thou art my portion, O Lord. *I have said that I would keep thy word.*" This is also the sincere determination of all amongst us whose portion the Lord is. "Where the trea-

sure is, there will the heart be also." If the Lord then be *our treasure*, our hearts will be fixed upon Him above all things. We shall take *His word* as the rule of our lives. We shall resolutely renounce every thing that interferes with our duty to Him, or tends to wean our hearts from Him. We shall sit loose to the things of this world; and study in all things to act as becometh those who are children of God and heirs of eternal glory. Thus, and thus only, can we make it manifest that the Lord is indeed our portion, and that our treasure is laid up in Him. For it is in vain to imagine that this is the case so long as we live in neglect of His word, or disobedience to His commandments. "Upon the *ungodly* He will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; *this shall be the portion of their cup!* For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, His countenance doth behold the upright."

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever. Amen.*

## SERMON II.

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THE DESIRE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S SOUL TO GOD-  
WARD, A HOLY AND PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE.

ISAIAH XXVI. 8.

*The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the  
remembrance of thee.*

THERE is nothing which more exactly distinguishes the truly regenerate from the mere nominal Christian, than the feelings which each entertains respecting God. With regard to the feelings of mere nominal or unconverted Christians to Godward, they are very accurately described by various writers in the sacred Scriptures. Let it suffice, however, for the present, without multiplying quotations, to call to your recollection, my Beloved Brethren, the declaration of St. Paul, Rom. viii. 7. where he says, "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God."

What a remarkable and significant expression is this! The carnal mind, i. e. the mind of fallen

man in his natural or unregenerate state, is actually enmity or hatred against God! So far from being actuated by the feelings of love, gratitude, and reverence toward our Almighty Creator and All-bountiful Benefactor, our minds are naturally not only alienated from Him by inherent corruption, derived from fallen Adam, but still more decidedly opposed to Him by our own sinful desires and practices. What Isaiah says to the rebellious Jews, (lix. ch. 2 ver.) holds equally true with respect to every man in his natural state, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." For there can be no communion or interchange of love between the Almighty and a sinful creature, while continuing in sin. There can be no concord betwixt "light and darkness." "God," saith St. John, "is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," i. e. He is a perfectly pure and holy Being, without the least intermixture of sin. But such is the depravity of our nature, and the wickedness of our hearts, that we naturally "*love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.*" Our minds, while in their unconverted state, are "earthly, sensual, devilish." "Our affections are set upon things below, not on things above." The natural desires or tendencies of our soul are not towards God and heaven, but towards those things which excite and gratify, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." We

eagerly seek after money, pleasure, ease, honour, and such objects as seem likely to advance ourselves, or our families, in this world's estimation. But so far from earnestly desiring the love and favour of our God, so far from heartily seeking to keep Him continually "in remembrance," we too generally forget him altogether; or, if we think of Him at all, it is only in the light of a severe task-master, to whom *fear*, not love, constrains us to pay the unwilling service of a formal, lifeless, lip-worship. As he Himself said of the Jewish nation of old, "This people draweth nigh to Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their *hearts are far from Me*." Sad experience proves that this alienation of the affections from the Creator, was not peculiar to the Jews, but is equally characteristic of all the children of fallen Adam.

Having thus considered what the feelings of unconverted men are, with respect to God, as they are described in Scripture, and proved from our own experience; let us now proceed to consider the declaration of the prophet Isaiah in our text, where he says, (speaking in the name of that little remnant of pious Israelites who believed the Word of God and kept His commandments,) "The Desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee." There can be no surer evidence of a man's being truly regenerate than



the experience of such a desire "to God, and to the remembrance of Him," as is expressed in these words. For whether we consider this desire with reference to *its cause*, or to its *manner of operation* and *visible effects*, we shall find that in all these respects it bears the most unequivocal marks of a heavenly origin.

First, let us consider this desire of the Christian's soul to Godward, with respect to its *cause*. For it is to be observed, that when the prophet says, "the Desire of our soul is to *Thy name*," he thereby means "to God himself"—The "*name*" of any person, by a common Hebrew mode of expression, being put for the individual intended. What then, let us ask, is it that causes the true believer's soul to desire or long after God? It is evident, from what has been said, that it is nothing in *ourselves*, my Beloved Brethren, which causes any of our souls thus to long after God; because it has been already proved, from Scripture and experience, that our hearts are, by sin, naturally turned from Him, and that our "carnal minds are enmity against Him." And it is equally evident, that the Desire which our souls may feel to God, and to the remembrance of Him, cannot proceed from *Satan*, because he is the avowed enemy both of the Creator and his creatures; and it is his grand design, by every possible means of temptation and terror, to keep us still at enmity with Him, and to

prevent us from ever desiring or thinking of Him at all. It follows, therefore, that if we experience any of this sincere desire or fervent longing after God, which is expressed in the words of our text, it can only emanate from *Himself*, "From Whom alone (as our church teaches us to confess) all *holy desires*, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." It is produced solely and entirely by the renewing operation of His holy spirit upon our minds, effecting within us that great change which is repeatedly promised by almighty God to his believing people, in the writings of the prophets; as for instance, in Jeremiah xxxi. 3. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, *therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.*" And again, (xxxii. 38.) "They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." It is with reference to these precious promises that the Church is represented in Cant. i. under the figure of a bride saying to her spouse, "*Draw us, we will run after thee.*" And that this "drawing" of our souls to God and Heavenly things is altogether the effect of regenerating grace, and indispensably necessary before we can come to the Saviour, is positively declared by the blessed Jesus himself, in John vi. 44. where he says, "No man *can* come to me except my Father draw him;" and again, (John

vi. 37.) "All that the Father *giveth* me shall come to me!"

From these words, my beloved Brethren, we learn two important lessons,—First, That if our souls experience no such sincere desire after God, no such earnest longing after the enjoyment of his favour, and the remembrance of his name, as the prophet here speaks of, we may be *certain* that our minds are still in their natural state of enmity against Him; and if we die in this unconverted and ungodly state, scripture holds out to us no ground to hope for salvation. And, Secondly, we learn, that if our souls *do* experience this sincere desire after God, we are privileged to take comfort from the assurance that the *work of grace has been indeed commenced in us*. Our God is reconciled to us. He is drawing us unto himself with the bands of love. He has blotted out our iniquities, and received us into favour, for the sake of the all-prevailing merits and intercession of His dear son Jesus Christ, Who suffered for us, the just for the unjust, making our peace by the blood of his cross; and in Whom (blessed be His Name) "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement." And as the rain

ascends from the sea in vapours, and, after refreshing and fertilizing the face of the earth, returns again in streams and rivers to its parent Ocean; so likewise the Grace of God, which bringeth salvation by Jesus Christ, after first refreshing our souls and making them fruitful in every good work, returns again in holy desires and devout aspirations to God himself, the Supreme Fountain of grace from which it emanated.

Having thus discovered *the cause* of that desire of the soul to Godward, spoken of by the Prophet in our text, we proceed to consider, in the second place, in *what manner this desire operates*; and *what effects it produces in the soul where it really exists*. And here it may be observed, generally speaking, that the desire of the Christian's soul to Godward, operates for the most part like any other strong inclination of the human breast. We all know, my Brethren, in what manner the desire of *money* operates in the hearts and lives of the men of this world; namely, by making them "rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," in their eager pursuit of it. So likewise, with respect to the desire of *pleasure*—How greedily do the children of vanity and dissipation seek after every means of gratifying their carnal lusts and propensities! The same may also be said of the desire of knowledge, of power, of fame, or any other ruling

passion of the human breast; they all operate by causing the individual to be proportionally eager and active in the pursuit of that object, the attainment of which is so earnestly longed after. So is

also with respect to that desire of the Christian's soul to Godward, of which we have been speaking: wheresoever it exists at all, it will without doubt shew itself by causing the individual to be *proportionally zealous and diligent in seeking the favour of God by every means which His holy word sets forth as likely to obtain it*. Always, however, keeping in mind this important difference; viz. that whereas the *natural* desires of our souls after earthly things, such as money, pleasure, fame, &c. are continually excited and increased by those objects which surround us, and meeting with nothing in ourselves to oppose them are permitted to operate with full force and vigour, like a boat sailing along with the current; the *spiritual* desires of our souls after God and heavenly things, being, on the contrary, not only checked and counteracted by the unholy influence of those objects with which we are conversant, but also strongly opposed by that "Law of sin in our fleshly members which for ever warreth against the law of our minds," are therefore never (in this life) permitted to act with full force and vigour, but are always more or less impeded by the temptations of "the world, the flesh, and the devil."

Thus grace in the believer's breast, as Mr. Cecil justly observes, is like a boat *sailing against the stream*. The Christian has continually to bewail "that his flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that he cannot do those things that he would." As water, which by some powerful external pressure has been forced upwards far beyond its natural level, is continually acted upon both by the attraction of the earth, and the weight of the superincumbent atmosphere, so as always to gravitate or tend downwards; in like manner, my Christian Brethren, the desires and affections of our souls, being (if I may so speak) forced upwards by Divine Grace far beyond their natural level, are constantly acted upon both by the attraction of earthly vanities, and the grievous burden of worldly cares and passions, so as always to gravitate or tend downwards to earth; yea, and they would sink altogether, *were it not that the same all-powerful Grace which first raised them upwards, still continues to uphold them*. Hence it is that we are so "sorely let and hindered in running the race that is set before us." Hence it is, that our souls, clogged and fettered with the chains of flesh and sense, are so grievously impeded in their heavenward aspirations. But still, if we are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, these very things, which in one sense check and hinder us, will in another sense have the effect of making us even still more desirous of God and

heavenly things; just as the chain which binds the captive to his dungeon makes him pant more eagerly for liberty, or as the crosses and delays which the traveller meets with on his road homewards, make him the more anxious to arrive safely at the end of his journey.

And this suggests to us another illustration of our subject. The true Christian has been well compared to an affectionate child in a foreign country, returning to his father's house after a long absence. All his desires and affections tend towards home. He looks forward with longing anticipation to the moment when he shall once more embrace his beloved parent, and take up his abode beneath his hospitable roof. And though the country through which he is travelling may attract much of his attention; though he may frequently stop for a season to admire its beauties, to refresh himself with its fruits, or to converse with its inhabitants; yet it never for an instant enters into his mind to fix his residence amongst them: for the *desire of his soul is homeward*, and the dearest object of his wishes is to embrace his parent, and resume his place in the bosom of his family. Thus it is, I say, with respect to the child of God. Taught as he is by the Spirit to call him "Abba, Father," and having "his love shed abroad upon his heart by the Holy Ghost," he "counts himself a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth," and earnestly seeks

for a "better country, that is a heavenly." For there his Father dwells. Thither all the holy desires and affections of his soul aspire. And there he is sure of meeting with a cordial reception, seeing that his elder brother, Christ, is gone before to prepare a place for him. "I go," He says, "to prepare a place for you."

Again, the truly regenerate believer, whose soul sincerely desires God as his portion, may be distinguished from the mere nominal, or unconverted Christian, by this;—that whereas the nominal Christian places his whole happiness in the enjoyment of the good things of this life, and has no idea of any felicity superior to that afforded by his earthly possessions, his intellectual or sensual gratifications; the sincere believer, on the contrary, places his chief, yea, his only *true* happiness, in the enjoyment of God's favour, and the assurance of His pardoning mercy and acceptance. For this he longs—for this he sighs—for this he seeks above all things, as the "one thing needful" to his comfort. It is *not* that he is insensible to the pleasure and satisfaction ~~to be derived~~ from temporal blessings. It is *not* that he is ignorant how very much the possession of money, of power, of knowledge, and of friends, can contribute to his earthly comfort, and his means of doing good. Of this the Christian is as sensible as other men, and to obtain these he labours in the pursuit of his lawful



ocation, as industriously (perhaps more so) than his neighbours. But while his religion by no means causes the believer to be "lothful in business," it certainly inclines him to be "*servent in spirit, serving the Lord.*" Temporal blessings do not (as with worldly men) constitute his highest good. Earthly happiness is not the habitual or uppermost object of his desires. His regenerate soul aspires far beyond earth and its vanities. He feels himself a sinful perishing creature, placed in a sinful perishing world. He perceives that the good things of this life are not capable of affording him real happiness, or permanent peace of mind. Deprived of the sense of the love and favour of that God whom his soul longs after, the world, with all its boasted treasures, seems to him a "dry and barren wilderness where no water is." He feels a vacuum at heart which nothing terrestrial can fill up; and his language is that of David, (Psalm xlii. 1, 2.) "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God, my soul is athirst for God, even for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God." On the other hand, in those happy seasons when his soul is blessed with the sweet assurance of God's favour, he feels himself, like the Psalmist, "satisfied, as it were, with marrow and fatness;" and can say, "Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee."

But it is not by inward frames and feelings alone, that the desire of the Christian's soul to Godward manifests itself. For while the actions of unconverted men are all performed in a worldly spirit, and proceed from no higher motives than self-interest or self-gratification; the true believer's actions are all, on the contrary, more or less influenced by this holy desire for the favour of God with which he is animated. This is the main spring that sets every wheel of the spiritual machine in motion. By this the Christian *desires* and *strives* to regulate his every thought, word, and deed. It is his hearty wish and earnest endeavour to keep God and his laws continually "*in remembrance.*" In the market or on the change; in the shop or the counting-house; in the crowd, or in the closet; in the drawing-room or at the social board; this desire *habitually* operates within him, so as to keep a holy restraint upon his naturally evil passions and propensities. Whithersoever he goes, or wheresoever he sojourns, he cannot forget that he is in the presence of a heart-searching God, "Who is continually about his path and about his bed, and spieth out all his ways." And as a lover in the presence of his mistress, or a man in the company of one for whom he has a profound respect, studies by every means in his power to do those things which please, and to avoid those things which offend; in like manner, also, the

Christian, whose soul sincerely desires the love and favour of his God; earnestly wishes and endeavours to make His commandments the rule of his conduct; and whatsoever he does, in thought, word, or deed, labours as far as in him lies, to "*do all to the glory of God.*" And since through the infirmity of his nature, he is, alas! continually falling short of this *perfect rule* of Godliness, he is, for this reason, kept in a state of habitual penitence and self-abasement. The constant *confession* of his heart is that of Job's, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes;" or that of Isaiah's, "Behold I am a man of unclean lips,—all my righteousness is as filthy rags;" or that of Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the constant *prayer* of his heart is that of David, "Oh give me understanding, and I will keep Thy law;" "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart;" "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me. Search me and know my heart, try me and examine my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the ways everlasting!"

Lastly. As all the privileges of God's word, and promises of His favour, are addressed exclusively to those who "*seek*" for them; and as it is expressly declared, that "all who seek the Lord shall certainly find Him;" and that, "*He satisfieth the*

*longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness*”—the sincere Christian, believing these promises to be true, and these privileges to be real, is thereby excited, earnestly to seek God, both in his public and private ordinances. Seeing that it is written, “Whosoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them;” he, for this reason, loves to go up to the house of the Lord, to join in spirit with the saints and angels, who keep holy day to the God of Jacob. The Sabbath, which to mere nominal Christians appears the most tedious day of the week, is, to the really regenerate soul, a day of sacred rest and rejoicing. While others are glad to invent any excuse for absenting themselves from public worship, in which their hearts take no pleasure, the true believer sincerely desires to consecrate that *one day*, at least, out of the seven, to the service and adoration of Him whom his soul longs after. For this reason, the language of his heart is that of David’s, (in Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2.) “How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” He is able to say with sincerity, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.” He is glad when his friends and relations say unto him, “Let us go up to the house of

the Lord.' He is well pleased to have an opportunity of publicly honouring his Heavenly Father by the willing homage of a grateful heart, and the loud hallelujahs of an adoring tongue. He rejoices to join the assemblies of the Faithful in acknowledging and bewailing his sins, making known his wants and weaknesses, pleading for mercy to himself and all mankind, and worshipping the God of Spirits, in spirit and in truth. He takes delight in hearing the "watchmen of the Holy city," telling him "where to find his Beloved," and pointing out the footsteps of His flock who know His voice and are obedient to His call. It is his fervent prayer that *he* too may be found amongst the number of those chosen sheep for whom the "Good Shepherd laid down His life, and whom none can pluck out of His hand." For this reason he *desires to look above the pulpit*, even to Him that sitteth on the mercy-seat between the cherubim; and in the voice of the minister he wishes to recognize not the voice of a feeble man, nor yet of a favourite preacher, but that of the chief Shepherd and Bishop of Souls calling out of Heaven, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."—"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Nor is it only in the house of God, or in the religious assembly, that the true Christian experiences these holy desires and affections. He carries them

forth also into the world, and into his own family. For though the extraordinary excitement produced by public religious exercises may soon cease, yet, like the overflowings of the Nile when the flood has subsided, it leaves a rich sediment behind. In the closet, the true believer is the same as in the church. The desire of his soul to God, and the remembrance of Him, is equally sincere in private as in public. While the men of this world are wasting their precious hours of relaxation in slothfulness or luxurious revelry, the Christian will be found betimes in his secret chamber, on his knees, pouring out his soul, or at least *desiring* to pour it out, before Him “who seeth in secret,”—wrestling with Him, like Jacob, in prayer; and, as it were, saying, “I will not let Thee go, till Thou bless me.” His determination is, in this respect, the same as David’s, “O God, Thou art my God, *early* will I seek Thee; yea, evening and morning and at noon, will I pray unto Thee and cry aloud.”

Nor is the daily study of His Holy Word forgotten. That word is his meditation day and night. It is the comfort of his heart, the companion of his solitude. It cheers him when sad, strengthens him when weak, confirms him when doubting, instructs him when ignorant, raises him when fallen. Its sacred pages, like the steps of Jacob’s ladder, help his soul to mount from earth to Heaven. He turns to it as eagerly as the hungry man turns to his food, or the

thirsty man to his drink. He desires to take it as a light to his feet, and a lantern to his paths, during his weary pilgrimage through this vale of tears. And as the miser mentioned by the heathen poet, who, when the world laughed at him for his penury, was wont to console himself by retiring into his closet and counting over his beloved money-bags; even so the Christian, when scoffed at by his worldly acquaintances, on account of his religion, can comfort himself by entering into his closet, and opening that inexhaustible treasury of spiritual riches—his Bible, where he finds it written, “I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.” And these words appear to him far *more desirable* “than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the honeycomb.”

Let us, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, judge of the reality of our faith, and the sincerity of our Christian profession, by enquiring whether our souls experience any such *desire* “to God and to the remembrance of His name,” as this which we have been considering. Let us beware of suffering ourselves to be imposed upon by temporary frames and feelings, but seriously observe whether our religious affections are of such a nature as to produce in us *an habitual desire to keep* God and His laws continually before our eyes, and to seek “His kingdom and His righteousness” as above all things essential to our happiness. And if our

consciences testify that such is indeed the sincere wish of our hearts, let us be of good cheer, even though we cannot attain unto that perfect conformity to His will, after which we so earnestly strive. Knowing that our *very desire* to do so comes from Himself, and that it is written, "*He will, in His own good time, fulfil the desires of them that fear Him, yea, He will hear their cry, and will help them.*" Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*



## SERMON III.

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IN WHAT RESPECTS THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE  
NOT TO BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

ROMANS XII. 2.

*Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

THERE is nothing more clearly and positively revealed to us in the word of God, than the difference that exists between the Church of Christ, and what is commonly called "the world," i. e. the great mass of mankind in general. The line of distinction between these two bodies is most exactly laid down, both by the blessed Jesus Himself, and His Apostles. And it is a fact which our Lord seems to take peculiar pleasure in asserting, "that His disciples are not of this world." "If ye were of the world," He says to them, "the world would love its own, but *because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you." And again, in His last prayer for His believing people, (John xvii.) addressing His Heavenly Father, he

says, " I pray for them, *I pray not for the world*, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine." "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" And in another place he says to Pilate, " My kingdom (meaning His church) is not of this world." The Apostle Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow-Christians, says, " We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God." St. James moreover describes the *effects* of pure and undefiled religion to be this, " To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself *unspotted from the world.*" And again, (in iv. 4.) He says, " The friendship of the world is enmity with God, whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God." Once more St. John gives this important advice to Christians in general—" Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father abideth not in him, for all that is in the world ; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." When we call to mind, therefore, these repeated declarations of the blessed Jesus Himself, and his Apostles, we cannot but regard it as an incontrovertible truth, that the " Church of Christ" and

the "world," are two distinct bodies, widely and eternally separated from one another; insomuch, that they who are "of the world" do not belong to the Church of Christ, and those who are members of that "Elect, Redeemed, and Sanctified" Body, which the Son of God purchased unto Himself with His own blood, can no more be considered, in *this sense of the words*, as belonging to the world.

If we enquire into the reasons why it is necessary to draw this marked and total separation between the Church of Christ, and what is commonly called "the world," an answer may be found in the 5th chapter of the 1st Epistle of St. John, and 12th verse, where he declares, that "*the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" The whole world is, as it were, in rebellion against its Creator, and consequently obnoxious to the curse of His law, which the prophet Ezekiel represents under the figure of a "roll flying over the whole earth." For this reason it is, that the world is emphatically termed "*evil*," and the great end of our Lord's "giving Himself for us" declared to be, that He might "deliver us from this present *evil world*." For "*evil*," both natural and moral, has, in consequence of Adam's transgression, inundated the whole earth, like a second deluge; *overwhelming in destruction both the souls and bodies of its wretched inhabitants.* But the Church of Christ, ransomed as it is by His precious blood, floats triumphantly,

like the ark of old upon the surface of the troubled waters; and being upheld by the Spirit of the living God, guided by His counsel, and secure under His protection, affords a certain and complete salvation to every perishing sinner that flees to it for refuge. In this life it shields them from all the storms and tempests which "the God of this world" excites against them. And when the voyage of life is ended, it lands them in safety upon the "everlasting mountains."

These observations are naturally suggested to us by the words of our text, in which St. Paul earnestly cautions the Roman Christians against conformity to this world. "Be not conformed," he says, "to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Let us, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, humbly praying for Divine assistance, proceed to consider in what respects the Christian is commanded not to be conformed to this world.

· And First, By "not being conformed to the world," the Apostle cannot intend that Christians should withdraw themselves from all intercourse or connexion with worldly or unconverted people; for in this case, as he himself says to the Corinthians, "They must needs go out of the world altogether." The spirit of Nonconformity to the world, which is so repeatedly set forth as a distinguishing characteristic of the Lord's

people, is far from implying that those who believe in Him should renounce their temporal business or pursuits; that they should neglect those various important duties which, as members of society, they undoubtedly owe to their families, their neighbours, their country, and mankind in general; or that they should shut themselves up in gloomy and morose seclusion from the company of all their worldly friends and acquaintances. If this were to be the consequence of a cordial reception of the doctrines of the Gospel, Christianity, so far from being a blessing to mankind, would, on the contrary, prove its greatest curse. It would rend asunder all the ties of friendship and affection, which bind man to his fellow men. It would root up the very foundations of domestic happiness and social order. It would, in a *perverted* sense of our Lord's words, "Set a man at variance with every member of his own household," and render him a sullen misanthropic monster, equally odious in the sight of God and man. And (what is still more important) it would invalidate those positive precepts so repeatedly enjoined upon the Lord's people, of "Doing good unto all men," "Loving our neighbours as ourselves," being dutiful and affectionate to our parents, our wives, our children, our domestics; and innumerable other injunctions of a similar import, which are all obviously founded upon the principle, that

the Christian is a social and active being ; and that his great business is, not to bury his talent in the earth by slothfulness and inertia,—not to hide his candlestick under a bushel, by passing his time in the darkness and solitude of a convent or a nunnery,—but, on the contrary, “ to let his light shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven.” For this reason it is that our Lord, in His sermon on the Mount, says to His disciples, “ ye are the light of the world ;” and again, “ ye are the salt of the earth.”

Hence we learn, my Beloved Brethren, that Christianity was by no means intended to *eradicate* our natural affections, but only to *moderate* and *sanc-tify* them. As long as we are in the world, we *must* more or less hold intercourse with the men of the world. This is at once our duty and our cross, and as such we must not shrink from it. Herein, moreover, consists one great test of the sincerity of our faith ; for unless we lived *in* the world, we could have no opportunity of glorifying God by manifesting the power of His grace to deliver us from its snares and temptations. The very existence of grace, presupposes the existence of temptation, without which it would have no room for exercise. For if we had no temptations to sin, there would manifestly be no grace in our not committing it. If the world had no allurements for us, there would be no virtue in our

overcoming it. If we had no dangers to surmount, or enemies to contend with, the believer's life would not be represented (as it uniformly is) as a scene of perpetual conflict and self-denial. In this respect the world may properly be regarded as the Christian's *field of battle*, in which our faith, courage, and love to the Captain of our Salvation are put to the proof. And if we are indeed enlisted under His banners, and are faithfully following Him as our leader and commander, we shall prove that we are so, not by withdrawing from the world altogether, and still less by conforming to its sinful practices; but by "*Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;*"—by overcoming it, by raising our thoughts and affections above it, by not being conformed to its *principles*, its *customs*, or its *conversation*.

First, I say, my Christian Brethren, we are called upon, as followers of the Son of God, not to be conformed to the *principles* or *maxims* of this "evil world," which are all in direct opposition to those inculcated by His Holy Word. Take, for instance, the principles which worldly men have adopted and act upon respecting religion in general. They commonly regard it as an affair of secondary or minor importance, or rather indeed of no *serious* importance whatever. Their favourite maxim is, "No matter what a man's religion is, (i. e. no

matter whether he be a Christian or an Infidel, a worshipper of God or an Atheist) provided he prove himself a useful and upright member of society." A more dreadful and dangerous principle than this cannot be conceived: for exclusive of its manifest absurdity in supposing that any man can be a *really* useful citizen who treats the worship of his Creator with irreverence or neglect; exclusive also of its decided inconsistency with all the other maxims of worldly prudence by which a man's avowed evil principles are regarded as affording fair ground for suspecting the integrity of his outward conduct; what is this but a direct insult offered to the religion of the Bible?—A virtual denial of its truth?—A trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God;—and a substitution of external virtue, in place of internal holiness? Verily, my Dear Brethren, we cannot be too much on our guard against such sceptical and latitudinarian principles as these, which unhappily are but too popular amongst the people of this world. If there be a word of truth in that sacred volume, which the best and wisest of men have revered as a revelation from God, the religion of Christ crucified is a matter of the most *paramount* importance. It is, indeed, comparatively, "The one thing needful," and as such, should occupy the first and highest place in our hearts; according to the direction of our blessed Lord Himself, who says,



"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these (necessary) things shall be added unto you." We may observe, He does not forbid His disciples seeking an honest livelihood for themselves and their families, by following their lawful vocations; but He warns us not to be so *over anxious* about the things of this world, as to lose sight of that eternal world which is most worthy of our solicitude: and He affectionately exhorts us to make it the first and principal object of our ambition, that when we leave this terrestrial scene, we may obtain an entrance into that heavenly kingdom where we shall be blessed for ever with the society of our God, and His holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Let us, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, obey this affectionate admonition of our Lord, by earnestly seeking, through faith in His Gospel, to obtain the blessing of God and the salvation of our souls as the first and principal things, without which it is impossible for us to be happy either here or hereafter. And when we hear our worldly friends and acquaintances scoffing and upbraiding us, as fools and enthusiasts, and, with a perversion of Solomon's words, telling us "Not to be righteous over much," let us remember that we must not "*be conformed to this world.*"

Another thing we should be cautioned against

connected with this division of our subject is, Conformity to the false but fashionable principles which professing Christians have adopted respecting *the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Such is the deplorable ignorance of Scripture truth that prevails amongst nominal or worldly Christians, that the fundamental doctrines of that Gospel, as, for instance, the universal corruption and condemnation of the human race, the consequent inability of fallen man to render himself acceptable with his Creator, by any merits or exertions of his own; the sufficiency of the sufferings, righteousness, and intercession of the Son of God *alone* to secure the salvation of all who believe in Him; and the indispensable necessity of “regeneration,” or of a complete “*transforming and renewal of our minds after the image of God, by the sanctifying operation of His Holy Spirit*”—These *fundamental* doctrines, I say, of the Gospel, and of the Church of England are, for the most part, altogether lost sight of by many who profess to believe them; and the maxim universally adopted by nominal Christians is, that if a man does his best, if he be conscientious in the performance of his duty, as far as he knows, by attending to the outward forms of Christianity, abstaining from the grosser vices, and doing as much good as lies in his power, God will accept him *for the sake of his own merits, together with those of the Lord Jesus Christ*,

I am persuaded, my Beloved Brethren, that it would be altogether unnecessary for me to occupy any of your time in exposing the total falsehood of this most unscriptural maxim, by which the Law and the Gospel are confounded together, the standard of Christian morality lowered down to a level with depraved human nature, and the Saviour's all-sufficient merits set forth as *supplementary* to our own. Suffice it, therefore, to remind you of the Apostle's words, (Rom. xi.) "*If our salvation be of grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work:*" and, again, "*By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest a man should boast. For we are (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

Whensoever, therefore, any of our worldly friends or acquaintances attempt to weaken our faith in these *fundamental* doctrines of the Gospel, or to instill any other principles into our minds than those which are plainly revealed in the Scriptures of truth, let us keep in mind the Apostle's direction, "*Be not ye conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind;*" and again he says, "*If any man, yea, if*

an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you, let him be accursed."

Time will not permit us to enumerate all the instances in which the principles of worldly or unconverted men are in direct opposition to the Word of God. There is the principle of what is commonly called *honour*, (but which ought to be called *revenge*,) which teaches, that for the slightest provocation, it is right for you to call your neighbour into the field, and attempt to take his life, or give him a chance of taking yours! What a dreadful—what an absurd—what an unchristian principle is this, which is yet daily applauded and acted upon by those who profess the religion of the "Prince of Peace!!" What unspeakable misery has this barbarous principle of *honour* produced throughout the world! How directly repugnant is it to the oft-repeated declarations of that blessed Jesus, who taught us, both by precept and example, to pardon, pray for, and even (in a sense) "*to love those who have injured us.*" To caution you, my Brethren, not to be conformed to the world in this instance, would, I trust, be superfluous.

But there is one thing more connected with this division of our subject, to which I wish to call your particular attention, and that is, the principle of *selfishness* or *covetousness in trade*, which teaches that it is lawful for a man to make use of every

means short of downright roguery, in order to promote his own interests, even to the detriment of his neighbours. It is to be feared that there is a vast multitude of merchants and shopkeepers in this great metropolis, who are too much actuated in all their dealings by these selfish principles ; who, as it were, make a God of their money, carry on their business in a spirit of covetousness and extortion, and whose minds are from morning to night engrossed with no other object than the desire of amassing wealth, and making themselves and their families *respectable* in the world. Against this selfish and worldly spirit, my Dear Brethren, we cannot be sufficiently on our guard ; for even many of those who make a profession of Evangelical Christianity, seem to be very much influenced by it, and thus lay themselves open to the Apostolic rebuke, “ Are ye not *carnal* and *walk as men* ! ” It is the too great prevalence of this worldly spirit amongst us, which brings discredit upon our holy profession, and imminent danger upon our own souls. For when “ the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of money, and the desires of other things,” take possession of our hearts, they must, more or less, as our Blessed Lord declares, “ choke up the word of God, and prevent us bringing forth fruit to perfection.”

Be ye not, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, conformed to the world in this respect. Abhor the cor-

rupt but favourite maxim, that “ money is the one thing needful.” Moderate your desires of gain so as to bring them into captivity to the will of God. Beware of that covetousness which the Apostle declares is virtual idolatry. Keep in mind the words of the Saviour, “ Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” Remember also the declaration of the wise monarch of Israel, “ He that hasteth to be rich, hath an evil eye ;” and “ If thine eye be evil,” saith our Lord, “ thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” Study then, my Brother, in all your dealings, to look as much as possible, with a “ *single eye*,” to the glory of God your Saviour. Ask yourself from time to time, are these the principles which the Son of God inculcated? Is this the spirit or temper of mind in which I should wish to meet death and judgment? While you are by no means, “ Slothful in business,” pray continually that you may be at the same time, “ Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” And “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

A second respect in which we are all called upon, my Christian Brethren, not to be conformed to this world, is with regard to its customs or fashions. I allude not, at present, to those practices of worldly men, which, although notoriously indulged in, are confessedly criminal. I speak not of those lusts of

the flesh which are manifest, such as these, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like;" of which it is acknowledged, by all who admit the truth of the Holy Scriptures, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Addressing, as I do, a congregation of professing Christians, many of whom I have reason to know are sincere in their profession, I deem it unnecessary to caution you not to be conformed to the world in such practices as these, which should not be so much as *named* amongst a people professing Godliness. I would rather hope that I might with truth apply the words of the Apostle to many amongst you, and say, "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked, *according to the course of this world*; according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; amongst whom (alas!) we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for *the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin*, hath quickened us together with Christ; by (whose) grace we are saved"—from

the dominion and practice of such gross abominations as these. But when I would exhort you, my Beloved Brethren in Christ, not to be conformed to the customs of worldly people, I allude particularly to those pleasures and fashions of the age which the world sanctions as *innocent*, but which the Gospel of our crucified Master condemns as *unholy*. For example, frequenting public theatres, where the name of God is repeatedly used "in vain," and spectacles of the most immoral and licentious tendency exhibited for the gratification of the spectators ;—going to balls, concerts, masquerades, club-rooms, race-courses, and other places of fashionable dissipation, where the serious profession of Christianity is despised and hooted at—spending hours after hours at the card table, reading novels, or in any other species of amusement which has a decided tendency to *waste our precious time, inflame our passions, irritate our tempers, wean our thoughts from God and spiritual subjects, and totally unfit us for those habits of frequent prayer and the study of God's word*, which are at once the *principal business and pleasure* of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that it is unnecessary for me, my Brethren, to disclaim the smallest intention of representing Gospel Christianity in a gloomy or austere point of view. Assuredly its ways, though *narrow*, are ways of *pleasantness* to all who



are really imbued with its spirit; but then, its pleasantness consists in walking in those *narrow ways*, and not in the *broad ways* of the ungodly multitude, who think of nothing but saying to their souls, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Neither will you suspect me, or any other faithful minister, of meaning to deny (what we all feel from experience to be the fact) that some kind of relaxation is necessary for the Christian as well as for other men. Without doubt it is very true, that we cannot be always engaged in religious exercises; for though the Spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak, and our wearied minds as well as our exhausted frames, stand in need, from time to time, of refreshment and recreation. But however certain this may be, another thing is equally certain, viz. that it is not in such pleasures or amusements as those we have just been alluding to, that the true Christian will turn for relaxation. The soul that is really *renewed* by the Holy Spirit of God, so as to be made deeply sensible of the awful importance of eternity and the comparative vanity of all earthly things, and which has learned by experience to take delight in holding communion with its Heavenly Father, and in the study of His Holy Word, will abhor the idea of mingling with the ungodly multitude, in these their carnal and unholy amusements. *For surely those amusements well deserve the name of unholy, from which*

*the infidel, the drunkard, the debauchee, the gamester, and the public prostitute, derive their principal profit and gratification!* Is it becoming a people whom the Word of God describes as “a holy people, a royal priesthood, *called to be saints,*” to enter into the society of, or enjoy pleasures in common with such characters as these? Would the blessed Jesus ever have frequented places of this description? And are we not positively informed, that “*He left us an example that we should walk in His steps?*” The apostle Paul, moreover, directs us “*to be followers of Him, even as he was of Christ;*” and if this our great exemplar were now alive upon earth, think you, my Beloved Brethren, that we should ever *follow him into the theatre, the ball-room, the masquerade, or the card-party?* Should any one present choose to meet death at such places? And is it not our imperative duty to “watch and pray,” that we may be always prepared to meet our God, since we know not the day nor the hour when He shall summon us to judgment?

Besides, are not these very things to be included in the number of those “pomp and vanities of this wicked world,” which, as members of the Church of England, we have, both at baptism and confirmation, solemnly promised to *renounce?* My Beloved Brethren it is in vain to deny it; the

mind which flies to such resources as these for pleasure, is not *a renewed mind*. It is not "the mind of Christ Jesus," nor of one of His sincere followers. And the man or the woman who seeks gratification at such places as these, can experience no happiness from the thought of spending eternity in Heaven; *where such kind of pleasures find no admission, and where the never-ceasing praise and adoration of Jehovah constitute the supreme felicity of its glorified inhabitants*. Wherefore, my Brethren, I do most earnestly exhort you, as you hope for admission into the kingdom of glory, that ye *be not conformed to the customs and fashions of the world in this respect, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds*. Come out from amongst the gay and thoughtless multitude, who are thronging the broad road which leadeth to destruction! Prove yourselves to be indeed like your Divine Master, "*holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners*," in your pleasures, as well as your principles. When you wish for relaxation, seek for it in the endearments of domestic life, in the society and conversation of Christian friends who agree in principles with yourselves, in wholesome exercise, or in reading such useful and entertaining books (as histories, biographies, &c.) which give a true description of human life, and do not, like novels, inflame the

imagination, rouse the passions, and excite expectations of a romantic happiness, which never have been and never can be realized.

In point of dress, also, permit me to suggest a few cautions. It is really lamentable to observe what immense sums of money many who make a serious profession of Christianity do yet squander away in the adornment of their perishing bodies, while thousands of their poor neighbours are permitted to pine away their lives in hunger and nakedness. I by no means wish to inculcate any affected singularity in dress, nor yet any neglect of person in the least unbecoming your several stations. But I do most earnestly caution you against that vanity, that ostentation, that love of finery and of splendid apparel, which actuates the servant as much as her mistress, which leads to such excessive expense, and which is so totally unbecoming a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. *Be not ye, therefore, my Christian Brethren, conformed to the fashions of the world in this respect, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.* “Let your adorning be, not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold and apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

Lastly, Be not ye conformed to the *conversation*

of this world. We have seen that as long as we are in the world, we must more or less associate with the people thereof; but to use a familiar expression, "*the less the better.*" No good can possibly result to us from the conversation of worldly and unconverted people, and much, yea very much, evil has always been the consequence of frequenting their society. For the company of worldly people is infectious. Mingling with them, is like entering the chamber of one that has a fever. Their principles, their manners, their language, their habits of life, are so completely at variance with the Gospel of the Son of God, that it is almost impossible for us to be in habits of intimacy with them, without being more or less tainted with their spirit, and having our integrity endangered. While, therefore, I by no means counsel you, my Brethren, to behave with rudeness or moroseness to any, but on the contrary to shew all "meekness unto all men;" and to discourage as much as possible that pharisaical pride which would say to others, "Stand off, I am holier than thou;" I do, at the same time, most solemnly admonish you, as you value your own integrity and peace of mind, that be ye not conformed to the vain and unprofitable conversation of this world! Close your ears as much as possible against all language that has the least tendency to profaneness or licentiousness. "Set a watch upon the door of

your lips." "Avoid foolish talking and *jestings*, which are not convenient." Remember the words of the Son of God, "For every *idle* word men speak, they must give account thereof at the day of judgment." Let your conversation be "with grace, seasoned with salt." Knowing that our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also, we look for the coming of our Lord Jesus, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a *peculiar people, zealous of good works.*"

Hence we learn, that if we be indeed amongst the number of the Lord Jesus Christ's redeemed people, we *must needs be peculiar*, without any affected singularity. And this peculiarity whereby we are distinguished as belonging to Christ, consists in our being "*transformed by the renewing of our minds in righteousness and true holiness.*" For it is written, "If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His old love of the world, and of the vanities thereof, is brought into subjection to the will of God; and the believer is henceforth actuated by a *new spirit*, governed by *new principles*, filled with *new hopes*, and desirous of *new enjoyments*.

Let us examine ourselves, my Dear Brethren, whether this be our case. Let us fervently pray

to God our Saviour to "create clean hearts and to renew right spirits within us." Let us follow after that scriptural holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. And let us ever keep in mind the declaration of St. John, "*Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON IV.



THE BELIEVER "GIRDED WITH STRENGTH FOR  
THE BATTLE."

2 TIMOTHY II. 1.

*Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace  
which is in Christ Jesus.*

THE Christian's life, as it is described in the Scriptures of Truth, is a life both of action and of passion. There is no such thing as *idleness* permitted under the gospel dispensation. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the contrary, are called upon both to *do* and to *suffer* many things in their way to the kingdom of glory. For example, we are called upon, my Beloved Christian Brethren, to "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." "To labour that we may enter into eternal rest." "To deny and mortify our sinful lusts and propensities." "To put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new." "To watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation." "To take up our cross, and patiently endure hardship,



persecution, and suffering, for Christ's sake." In a word, to be ready to give up every thing, our property, our prospects, our friends, our reputation, yea, even our very lives themselves, should the glory of our crucified Master require it.

It is for this reason that our blessed Lord declares, that the road to the kingdom of heaven is straight and narrow, frequented but by few, and that He exhorts His disciples to endeavour, with all their might, to gain admission into it. "*Strive*," He says, "to enter in by the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because straight is the gate, and narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And it is also with reference to this, that the Christian's life is compared by the Apostle to so many things which imply in them *difficulty* and *danger*. Thus, for instance, it is likened unto a "pilgrimage" or wearisome and hazardous journey. "They count themselves," saith St. Paul, "strangers and pilgrims on earth." It is also compared, by the same Apostle, to a race, "So run," he says, "that ye may obtain." And again, in the chapter from which our text is taken, the Christian's life is likened unto a warfare or campaign, in which soldiers are contending for victory. "Thou, therefore," says the Apostle to Timothy, "endure hardness as a *good soldier* of Jesus

Christ, no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Now there are two things which suggest themselves to our minds, as necessarily following from these words of the blessed Saviour and His Apostle. The first is, that admission into the kingdom of eternal glory and happiness, is by no means so *easy* a thing as the men of this world seem to regard it. To hear some professing Christians speaking of heaven, we might be led to suppose, that going there was a sort of matter-of-course business, and that the road which leads to it, instead of being "*Straight* and *narrow*," was, on the contrary, so broad and smooth, as to require no pains or self-denial whatsoever, in those who walk upon it. But this, alas! is far different from the description which the word of God has given us of the matter. The kingdom of heaven, my Dear Brethren, is not to be entered on such easy terms as these. Admission into the society of God and His holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, is not obtained with such facility as unconverted persons are apt to imagine. On the contrary, we learn, in the second place, from what has been said, that we must be endued with extraordinary courage and resolution, in order to be able to endure the pains and fatigues of our heavenward journey; and that we must possess, more-

over, extraordinary strength and fortitude, in order to overcome the host of enemies and difficulties which present themselves before us at every stage of our spiritual progress. But where is this courage to be found? Whence is this strength to be obtained? Is it in *ourselves* we are to look for it? Alas! the natural strength or energy with which our minds and bodies are endued, is barely sufficient to surmount those temporal trials and difficulties which are of daily occurrence. But with respect to *spiritual* strength or energy, we have in ourselves none whatsoever. We are poor frail weak creatures, without courage, without resolution, without patience, without strength, in a word, without any thing that can in the least qualify us for encountering this straight and thorny road on which we *must* travel, if ever we hope to obtain possession of eternal felicity. "In us (we may truly say with the Apostle) there dwelleth no good thing." "We are not sufficient of ourselves, so much as to *think* any thing as of ourselves," so that if left to ourselves, or to our own unassisted strength, we must inevitably fall short of that heavenly blessedness to which our hearts aspire.

Where then, my Beloved Brethren, is our sufficiency to be found? The blessed Jesus Himself informs us, in the answer which He gave to His servant Paul, in 2 Cor. xii. 9. "*My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in*

*weakness.*" And it is in allusion to this declaration of the Saviour, that the Apostle in our text exhorts Timothy, his beloved son in the Faith, to "**Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.**" Which words lead us to consider, First, the *all-sufficiency* of the Saviour's grace; and, Secondly, our privilege of being *strong* in it. May God the Holy Ghost be pleased, of his infinite mercy, to bless the subject to the edification of our souls!

First, I say, my Christian Brethren, the words of our text lead us to consider the "all-sufficiency" of that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Apostle speaks of in our text. The word "**Grace**" itself signifies, as you are aware, the *free* undeserved love or favour which Almighty God bears to His believing people, and which, as it is only manifested in and through His beloved Son, is therefore called the "**Grace which is in Christ Jesus.**" "For the law, we are informed, came by Moses, but *grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ, and of His fulness do all His believing people receive, and grace for grace," i. e. for every grace which the Saviour possessed, His people receive from Him through faith an image or counterpart.

Now with respect to the "all-sufficiency" of the grace which is in Christ Jesus, this necessarily follows, from a consideration of His person, offices, and character. Who is this extraordinary Personage, let us ask, in whom we are directed to place

such implicit confidence, and from whom we are privileged to expect such supernatural strength? He is no less a being than the well beloved Son of the Most High God, partaking in "*all the fulness of the Godhead*," and therefore, as touching His *Divinity*, "equal to," and "one (as He declares) with His heavenly Father." "By Him," St. Paul informs us, in the 1st chap. of Colossians, "were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him, and He was before all things, and by Him all things consist." But although this adorable Being was thus in the *form of God*, and thought it no robbery to be *equal with God*, yet did He make himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, (a decided proof that He was not essentially an angel or created intelligence, for if so He must have been *always* a servant,) and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, "He did humble Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;"—thus procuring our perfect reconciliation with His Father, and "putting away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself." For which reason, God also hath highly exalted Him as the Saviour, Mediator, and King, of His believing people; as He Himself declared to His disciples after He was risen from the dead,—"*All power is*

committed unto me in heaven and in earth." "The Father hath given all things into His hand." "He is appointed Head over all things," saith the Apostle, "for His body, the Church." "Every enemy, both of Himself, and His people, is put under His feet;" "so that He can bruise them as with a rod of iron, He can dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now, surely, it must appear evident, from this account which the sacred Scriptures have given us of the essential divinity and almighty power of our blessed Saviour, in His glorious exaltation, as mediator and king of His church; that His grace or favour must be abundantly sufficient for the perfect salvation of all who trust in Him. Surely that man, however helpless in himself, must yet be accounted strong and safe, who is so happy as to possess an interest in the redeeming love of this our all glorious and omnipotent Immanuel, this "*God manifested in the flesh.*" Even in human affairs, that subject who is honoured with the especial favour and protection of his sovereign, is generally regarded as strong, in proportion to the power and dignity of the prince, his master. What then shall we say of him who enjoys the favour and protection of the King of heaven and earth? Truly such a man may well sing aloud with David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear; the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?" "Trust in

Him at all times, ye people, (saith Isaiah) for in the Lord Jehovah is "*everlasting strength.*"

Besides, let us further consider, how great things this grace which is in Christ Jesus, hath already done for us, and we shall thence be able clearly to understand how much more it is able to accomplish. The grace which is in Christ Jesus, has been sufficient to procure for us, my Christian Brethren, free and full forgiveness of our sins, however manifold and heinous they may have been; for it is "By grace we are saved, through faith;" and, consequently, it has been able to secure for us "Peace with God," and an inheritance in the incorruptible treasures of eternal life and glory, which are laid up in store for those that truly believe in Him. All this it has obtained for us, be it remembered, at no less a price than the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the Lord's anointed; for "Ye know (saith Paul) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich."

Moreover, this grace which is in Christ Jesus hath already (*if we are true believers*) been sufficient to effect a total and marvellous change in our own minds and hearts. It has in a great degree altered our most confirmed habits, and counteracted our strongest natural propensities. It has brought us to a knowledge of our guilty and help-

less condition. It has led us heartily to seek the mercy and love of our God as *the one thing needful* to our happiness. It has shewn us the comparative worthlessness and insignificancy of all earthly things, when placed in competition with heavenly. It *has* inclined us to abhor those besetting sins which once we loved, and to desire those spiritual objects and graces which formerly we hated. It has instructed us to “count all things loss, and judge them to be but dung, so that we may win Christ.” In a word, “this grace of God, which bringeth salvation, by His beloved Son, hath taught us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” The revolution which it has thus wrought in our characters and habits of life, is as complete as it was unlooked for. There was a time when we could not have believed it possible that such a change could have been effected in us, or that any thing could have induced us to think and act as grace has since constrained us to do. We may be confident, therefore, that as it has been sufficient to accomplish so much, it must be able to do even “exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us.*” If this grace was able (as we have experienced) to “quicken our souls into spiritual life, while yet they were dead in trespasses and sin,” and to “reconcile us to God while as yet we



were enemies to Him by our wicked works," we can have no doubt that it is also abundantly sufficient to sustain our spiritual life in this world, and enable us to lay hold on eternal life in that which is to come.

This seems to be the substance of St. Paul's reasoning in the 5th chap. of his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, "God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. If then," he adds, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by *His life*." That means, if the grace of the Son of God, when in the lowest state of degradation and suffering, was able to atone for our sins, and to procure for us all the blessings of redemption, how much more must the grace of the same Divine Being, now that He is highly exalted on His throne of glory, where He reigns for ever as King of His church, be sufficient to ensure the final and complete salvation of all who trust in Him.

Indeed, if this were not the case, the Gospel scheme of Redemption (with all humility be it spoken) would manifestly be imperfect. The Lord Jesus Christ (if we may be permitted so to speak) would not be worthy of our confidence, nor deserve the name of "Saviour," if, after all He did and suffered for us, He was yet unable to ensure our

final safety; and Christians, instead of being privileged to "rejoice in the Lord always," and "be strong in His grace," would, on the contrary, have reason to go doubting and desponding all their days, if after having committed their souls to Him, their salvation still remained a matter of *chance* and *uncertainty*; which it must be if they were left to contend with their spiritual enemies without an "all sufficient" grace to strengthen them, and an "Almighty arm to protect them."

But no, my Beloved Brethren. If we are called upon to "Work out our salvation with fear and trembling," we are, at the same time, cheered with the assurance that "it is God who *worketh in us* both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." If we are commanded to "fight" manfully against our spiritual adversaries, we are, at the same time, encouraged by the information that it is the Lord "who teacheth both our hands to war, and our fingers to fight," and who "girdeth us *with strength* for the battle." In the gift of His dear son Jesus Christ, it is positively declared, that "God hath given us *all things pertaining to life and godliness*." "Who is this, (saith the prophet,) that cometh from Edom in dyed garments from Bozra? I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*." Yea, He is "able (saith the Apostle) to save to *the uttermost*, all who come unto God by Him." "Wherefore, my Brethren,

strengthen ye the weak hands, make strong the feeble knees, say unto them that are of a fearful heart, *be strong*, fear not;" yea, "let the weak say I am strong." The weaker we feel ourselves, and the less confidence we place in our own abilities, the stronger we are in the grace of Him "whose strength is made perfect in our weakness." If we belong to His sheep who "know His voice, and obey His call, and who were eternally given Him by His Father, we are safe from all our enemies, because "Greater is He that is for us than he which is against us." "*His* we are, bought with a price, and none can pluck us out of His hand." "He is our *strong hold*, yea, He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him." "Fear not," He says to us, "I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

It is true, indeed, that our path to heaven is "Straight and thorny;" much tribulation of mind and body awaits us on the way, and our "mortal spirits tire and faint" at the difficulties and dangers which we meet with on the journey. But we have a blessed promise given us, that "Our shoes shall be iron and brass, and as our day is, so shall our strength be," and in our Lord Jesus Christ "All the promises of God are yea and Amen" to those who trust in Him.

It is true, moreover, that the enemies with which we are called to contend, are numerous and powerful. We must wrestle, not only with our depraved nature of flesh and blood, but also "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Our old taskmaster Satan, to whom we were by nature the willing servants, perceiving that we have escaped his net, "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour our souls." He regards us as rebels to his authority; he hates us with a determined and deadly hatred; and he employs every method which his diabolical ingenuity can invent, to terrify or tempt us to make shipwreck of our faith, and return back to our old allegiance.

The world also is another most potent enemy with which we are called to contend, and which, in every point of view, is greatly to be dreaded. "Its smiles and its frowns, its cares and its pleasures, its allurements and its threatenings, (as a pious writer observes) are equally inimical to our peace and safety. It tempts us from the path of duty by flattering promises of wealth and honour, of ease and power. It endeavours to shake our firmness by the fear of poverty, shame, and persecution. And if it fails of drawing us into compliance with its own evil maxims and practices, it regards us as enemies, loads us with reproachful

names, and holds us up before the men of the world as objects of scorn and ridicule."

But after all, our most formidable foe lies concealed in our own breasts. There is "a traitor in the camp" called self-will, who is ever on the watch for an opportunity to betray us to our enemies without. Our own hearts, my Dear Brethren, are most of all to be dreaded, for they are indeed, as Jeremiah declares, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Sin, it is true, is subdued within us, but it is far from being eradicated. There is still, as the Apostle says of himself, "A law in our members, warring against the law of our minds." "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so *that we cannot* do the things that we would." Our indwelling corruptions, our evil tempers, and unholy desires, continually call for our most strenuous opposition and unceasing vigilance. This it is that renders the Christian's life a scene of perpetual and agonizing conflict. No peace must be made, no parley entered upon, with our sinful lusts and passions. If we seriously desire admission into the kingdom of glory, we must be prepared to fight every inch of our way; for if we yield we are lost for ever. If we do not overcome our sins, they will certainly overcome us to our eternal destruction: but if we heartily enter upon the combat, trusting in the strength of our Lord, and in dependance upon

His gracious promises, we are sure of coming off “*more than conquerors over every enemy, thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

This is that glorious privilege of which we proposed to consider in the conclusion of the discourse. The Apostle assures us, “that (if we be Christ’s) sin *shall not* have dominion over us.—Why? Because we are not under the law, but under *grace.*” The grace which has already *partially* delivered us from the dominion of our sins, is pledged to finish the good work in us by our complete salvation. For this reason was “His name called Jesus, because He should save His people *from their sins.*” For “what the law (of the ten commandments) could not do, in that it was *weak*, through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,” hath accomplished for us. And if we, my Beloved Brethren, are enlisted under His banners, and are following Him as our Head and the Captain of our Salvation, “we shall go on from strength to strength, and from grace to grace,” until we are finally made victorious over every foe. It was in this strength that “Shamgar, the son of Anath, slew 600 Philistines with no other weapon than an ox-goad;” Sampson, his thousands with the jaw-bone of an ass; and David, the mighty champion Goliath, with a sling and a stone. And it is in this strength that we also are called upon

“manfully to fight the good fight of faith, against the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

“Our God,” my Christian Brethren, “fighteth for us.” “He taketh our part against them that hate us, therefore shall we see our desire upon our enemies.” “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but *mighty through God*, to the pulling down of strong holds.” “He is our refuge and strength,—a very present help in time of trouble.” His everlasting arms are always under us. His infinite power, wisdom, love, and faithfulness, are all in Christ Jesus, combined for our support. It is written, that “The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.” We may be persecuted, but shall not be forsaken. We may be cast down, but can never be destroyed. “Hast thou not known (saith Isaiah), hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God,—the Lord,—the Creator of heaven and earth, fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of His understanding. *He giveth power to the faint, to them that have no might He increaseth strength.* Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that *wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Here then, my Beloved Brethren, let us take our stand, for in this “Fear of the Lord, there is,”

as Solomon says, “strong confidence.” Whatever may be the situation or circumstances in which we are placed,—how great soever may be the dangers and difficulties with which we are called to contend,—let us never forget that it is our glorious privilege *to be strong*,—to feel secure and courageous in “the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” Yea, the more numerous and formidable our enemies, the more will the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified by enabling us to overcome them; so that by continually *waiting* upon Him in humble faith and prayer, earnestly pleading the glory of His name and the truth of His promises in our behalf, we are sure of obtaining from Him a continual supply of strength to help in every time of need. It was this grace of a covenant God, which enabled David to say, “The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me; though an *host* should encamp against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. For by Thee have I run through a troop, by the help of my God I have leaped over the wall.” And again, St. Paul, who in one place mournfully complains, “that in him there dwelt no good thing, and that when he would do good evil was present with him;” triumphantly exclaims, in another, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

To this all-sufficient grace, therefore, let us also



my Dear Brethren, continually look for fresh supplies of strength, and in so doing, we shall find with the Apostle, that when we feel ourselves "weak," then indeed we are "*strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.*" All other sources of strength in which we place confidence are no better than broken reeds, which will "pierce our hands when we come to lean upon them." But "the grace which is in Christ Jesus" is a staff that will never fail us, not even when passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Nor need the remembrance of our sins, however manifold and grievous they may have been, discourage us from trusting to it; for it is written, that "*where sin hath abounded, grace did much more abound.*"

Confiding in the "*exceeding abundance*" of this grace, we may rest secure in the midst of dangers and temptations. Let our most powerful enemies take counsel together against us and they shall be brought to nought, for "in the name of our Lord we shall destroy them." "Let them gird themselves, and they shall be broken in pieces." Yea, let them gird again, and again they shall be broken in pieces, "for with God for our strength and our shield, no weapon that is formed against us can prosper."

Oh! what a blessed privilege is this, my Brethren, for those amongst us who have faith to believe in it. Well may the Apostle say to us,

“ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, *be strong.*” “ Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus.” Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON V.

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THE NATURE OF THOSE SACRIFICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO OFFER HIM.

PSALM IV. 5.

*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

THE fact that the Lord Jehovah has always had a *chosen people* on earth in whose lives He will be glorified, is one respecting which no attentive reader of his Bible can entertain the slightest doubt. Even at the worst period of the Old Testament dispensation, when idolatry had reached its zenith, and the spiritual worship of Jehovah fallen to its lowest ebb, we read that He had "*reserved unto Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal.*" And so likewise throughout all the succeeding ages of His church, there has been, as St. Paul declares, "a remnant according to the election of grace;" and the question which is of greatest importance to us, my Brethren,

is—what is the description given of this remnant? or, what are those marks and characteristics by which the chosen people of God may be distinguished from others?

And first, with respect to the Old Testament church, we find the Lord God thus addressing His people by the mouth of His servant Moses in the 19th chap. of Exodus, 5th and 6th verses. “Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me, above all people, for all the earth is Mine, and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.” Observe, my Beloved Brethren, the Lord’s faithful and obedient people whom He has chosen unto Himself, are here said to be a “*kingdom of priests*.” The office of a priest we know is to offer sacrifices unto God; and accordingly we find it written of the Lord’s people, in the 33d chapter of Deuteronomy, 19th verse, that they should “*offer unto him sacrifices of righteousness*.” And that this description is not applicable exclusively to members of the Old Testament church, but intended to designate the Lord’s people in all ages of the world, is very plainly declared to us by the Apostle Peter, in the 2d chapter of his first Epistle, 5th verse, where he says (addressing himself to Christians in general), “Ye also are built up a spiritual house, an *holy priesthood*, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God by Jesus

Christ." And again, in 9th verse, "Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Thus we find that the chosen people of God are described as being universally a "royal priesthood," or a kingdom of priests, whose peculiar duty and privilege it is to offer unto God *spiritual sacrifices*, so called in opposition to those *fleshly sacrifices* of bulls and goats, offered by the Levitical priesthood, which were "the shadow of good things to come." In this respect, therefore, every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ must, without doubt, be considered as a *Priest*, and it is to this characteristic of the Lord's people that David alludes in our text, when he says, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." Which words, it may be observed, like many other equally short and significant passages of Scripture, contain in them *two things*; first, a *positive precept*, and secondly, a *blessed privilege*. "*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness*,"—this, my Brethren, is the precept; and then, "*Put your trust in the Lord*,"—this is the blessed privilege of those who obey the precept. As if the Psalmist had said, "The great business of all God's true and faithful servants, is to offer unto Him the sacrifices of righteousness; and having done so, it then becomes

their blessed privilege to place the most implicit confidence in His mercy and loving-kindness, both to accept their sacrifices and to save themselves to the uttermost."

Now these words of the Psalmist lead us, my Beloved Brethren, to consider, *first*, to whom they were addressed; *secondly*, what is the nature of those spiritual sacrifices, which they are directed to offer up; and *thirdly*, the blessedness of those whose privilege it is to put their trust in the Lord. Let us humbly pray that the Divine blessing may attend upon our meditations.

First, with respect to the persons unto whom the words of our text were addressed: the very language which the Psalmist makes use of, does itself point them out to us. The word sacrifice, we know, signifies something offered, or as it were *given* to the Lord, either by way of propitiating His favour, or thanking Him for His mercies. Now as no man can give that which he does not himself possess, it follows, that before any of us can offer unto God "*sacrifices of righteousness*," we must, if I may so speak, be previously possessed of some righteousness wherewith to make an offering. Since, therefore, there are but two descriptions of people in the world, the righteous and the wicked,—those who worship God in spirit and truth, and those who either do not worship Him at all, or only do so with the formal service

of the lips, "while their hearts are far from Him," it is obvious, that it can only be to the *righteous*, or spiritually-minded worshippers of God, that the words of our text are addressed. To exhort wicked or unconverted men, as such, to offer unto God sacrifices of righteousness, would be as absurd as it would be useless. How can they offer to their Creator that of which they are not possessed? Nay, it is positively declared in the 15th chapter of Proverbs, that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an *abomination* unto the Lord." So far from being pleased with any offerings made to Him by those who are living in sin and worldly-mindedness, the Lord, on the contrary, rejects them with disdain and abhorrence, as a solemn mockery of His Divine Majesty. In proof of this, we are informed, that He refused to accept the sacrifice of Cain, because He knew him to be a wicked man. Moreover, when Saul the king of Israel, after an act of premeditate disobedience in not utterly destroying the Amalekites, thought to atone for his iniquity by a hypocritical offering of sheep and oxen, we learn, that so far from being pleased therewith, the Lord, on the contrary, sent this severe rebuke to him, by the mouth of his servant Samuel, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

The repeated expostulations also, to this effect, which we find Him making with the rebellious Israelites by the mouth of all the prophets, plainly demonstrate how much He abhors the hypocritical worship and sacrifices of wicked or unconverted men: thus, for instance, the words of the prophet Isaiah, in his first chapter, are very remarkable, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, and of rams, and of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hearken. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well." And again, in the 6th chap. of Jeremiah, 20th verse, the Lord is represented as saying to His disobedient and backsliding people, "To what purpose cometh there unto Me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me, saith the Lord."

We see, therefore my Beloved Brethren, without multiplying quotations, that it is impossible for any one who is living in allowed sin, or whose



heart is not actuated by a spiritual fear of God, and obedience to His commandments, to offer unto Him sacrifices of righteousness. Offerings coming from persons of this character, are in His sight *sacrifices of wickedness*, not of righteousness. And as the bread eaten at the feast of the Passover was an abomination unto Him if mixed with leaven; so likewise all *sacrifices*, all prayers, praises, or services whatsoever, in which His all-seeing eye discerns the least *allowed* mixture of hypocrisy, pride, self-righteousness, or the habitual indulgence of any known sin, are rejected by Him as worthless and abominable. It is for this reason that Solomon, in the 5th chap. of Ecclesiastes, 1st verse, admonishes us when we enter the house of God, to be "more ready to hear, than to offer the *sacrifice of fools*, for they consider not that they do evil."

But it may be objected to what has been said, that if sin prevents our sacrifices from being accepted with God, and if none but those who are *righteous*, are able to offer unto Him such sacrifices as are pleasing in His sight, it would hence appear, that all men must be excluded from offering Him any sacrifice whatever, forasmuch as it is positively declared, that "all have sinned," and that "there is *none righteous*, no not one." This objection leads us, my Brethren, to the *second* consideration proposed at the commencement of this discourse,

viz. with respect to the nature of those sacrifices of righteousness, to which the Psalmist alludes in our text. And this indeed opens to us a wide field for profitable and interesting meditation.

For, in the first place, it brings to our minds *that one stupendous sacrifice for sin offered up by our Lord Jesus Christ upon Mount Calvary*, when, in pity to our perishing souls, He condescended to veil His Divine glory under a frail body of flesh, and to offer Himself without spot to His heavenly Father, as “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.” This is indeed a sacrifice which alone deserves the name, and the magnitude of which fills heaven and earth with astonishment. It is one which nothing but the wisdom of God could have devised, and nothing but His infinite power and goodness could have perfected. Herein, my Beloved Brethren, as St. John declares, “was the marvellous love of our God conspicuously manifested, in that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins;” and herein also was the inestimable love of the Son of God displayed toward us, in that “while we were yet sinners, He laid down His life for us.” It is of this sacrifice that the prophet Isaiah speaks in such affecting terms, in his 53d chapter, where he says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes

we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one after his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Hence we learn, that the consequences resulting from the sacrifice of the adorable Son of God upon the cross, were worthy of the exceeding magnitude of the undertaking. By His atoning sufferings, the iniquities of all who believe in Him are for ever purged away. He hath put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and by His obedience unto death, many, i. e. all believers, are *made righteous*; "for," as St. Paul says (10th of Romans), "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, unto all that believe." This is that great sacrifice pre-ordained before the creation of the world in the eternal counsels of Jehovah, of which all the sacrifices of bulls and goats in the law of Moses were but types or shadows. This was that true "Paschal Lamb," whose blood, when sprinkled upon our souls through faith, "cleanseth us from all sin," and delivers us from the just vengeance of our offended God; in reference to which, the Apostle saith, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." And it is only by virtue of this "*full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for sin,*" made by the Son of God

upon the cross, that fallen man is able to offer unto Him any acceptable sacrifice whatsoever.

Now this helps us to understand both the nature of those *sacrifices of righteousness*, to which the Psalmist alludes in our text, and also, who the persons are that alone are able to offer them. They are, in the first place, the *sacrifice of Christ's righteousness*, offered up in the hearts of those who sincerely believe in Him. It is very true, my Dear Brethren, that we have in ourselves no righteousness whatever wherewith to make an offering unto our God. Our best righteousness is so imperfect and defiled by sin, that, to use the significant language of Isaiah, it is of no more value than "filthy rags" in His sight. And if we were to presume to approach Him, "trusting in our own righteousness," we might be certain of being rejected by Him, like the Pharisees, with abhorrence, seeing that He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. But although, "*through our manifold sins and offences, we are indeed unworthy to offer unto God any sacrifice,*" yet, blessed be His name, He hath himself, in the person of His crucified Son, provided one for us, which is always acceptable. If we sincerely believe in Him, "our faith is imputed to us for righteousness;" and every time we exercise this faith in Christ crucified, by actually believing in Him as our only Saviour, and applying His all-

perfect merits and atoning blood to our souls, we may be truly said, in a spiritual sense, to “offer unto God a sacrifice of righteousness;” inasmuch as we thereby plead guilty before Him, and, as it were, entreat Him to accept His beloved Son’s righteousness in the stead of our’s. Thus we find that the more we live in the exercise of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the more sacrifices of righteousness do we spiritually offer up unto God. And whensoever, in humble dependence upon His merits and sufferings, we approach His table to “feed upon Him in our hearts, by faith with thanksgiving;” we do without doubt offer up to His Heavenly Father a most acceptable sacrifice, and one which He delights in receiving at our hands.

But further, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, not only procured “everlasting righteousness” as a boon for His believing people, but hath also obtained for us, that most excellent gift of “spiritual righteousness,” or *sanctification*, by means of which, all who believe in Him are enabled to live a holy and godly life; and to offer up spiritual sacrifices of obedience to God’s commandments, which, though sadly deficient in themselves, are yet, as Peter assures us, “Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Considering the subject in this light, we may affirm, that the sacrifices of righteousness which every real Christian offers up in the course

of his life, are beyond number ; forasmuch as every holy act of thought, word, or deed, proceeding from us in the name and for the sake of Christ,—every devout aspiration of our hearts,—every outward work of love to God, or love to man, which the spirit of the Saviour enables or even inclines us to perform, is without doubt a righteous and acceptable sacrifice unto His Heavenly Father. The more actively useful therefore, and devoted to God's service our lives are, the more of these sacrifices do we present to Him, and consequently, the more decided and unequivocal is our privilege to trust in Him.

But without entering upon so extended a consideration of the subject, let us briefly call to mind some of the most important of these sacrifices of righteousness, which it is our duty, my Christian Brethren, to offer up to God continually. And that which seems to deserve our first attention, is suggested to us by the words of David, in the 51st Psalm 16th and 17th verses, where he says, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it ; thou delightest not in burnt-offering ; *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*” Here, then, we are informed of a sacrifice of righteousness, which it is in the power of every penitent sinner frequently to offer unto his God, with the certainty of its being most acceptable to Him—namely, a

*heart broken and humbled in godly sorrow, by a deep conviction of its own sins and unworthiness.* Such was the sacrifice which David, Job, Jeremiah, Daniel, Manasseh, Peter, and all His saints of old were continually bringing to Him. And if we have nothing else to present to our God, still we need never be at a loss for an acceptable sacrifice, so long as we can offer Him a heart mourning and self-abased for having offended Him. Every secret tear which falls from the humble penitent's eyes, every deep-drawn sigh that his bosom heaves, every sorrowful confession of guilt that proceeds from his faltering tongue, rises as a grateful memorial before the throne of Him, who says of Himself, "I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." As often, then, as we are conscious of offering unto our God this most acceptable sacrifice of godly sorrow and humiliation for sin, we have the blessed privilege of trusting with implicit confidence to His promises of mercy and acceptance, through our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is written, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Another sacrifice, which David's words suggest

to us, may be found in the 141st Psalm, 1st and 2d verses, “ Lord, I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me, give ear unto my voice when I cry unto Thee ; *Let my prayer be set forth as the incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*” Here we are informed, my Christian Brethren, that our very prayers and cries to God for mercy, when they are accompanied with faith, may be compared to the incense and sacrifices which the high priest of the Jews daily offered upon the altar of the Most High : and when we recollect that we too have a “ Great High Priest within the vail, even Jesus Christ the righteous,” who standeth for ever at the right hand of God, interceding for us with Him—offering up our feeble petitions to the throne of grace *in His own name, and perfumed with the incense of His own all perfect merits,* surely we are encouraged to be instant and fervent in offering to God this acceptable sacrifice *of our prayers.* Let us then follow the example of the man after God’s own heart, who says of himself (in the 55th Psalm), “ Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray unto Thee, and cry aloud ;” and in so doing, we have the blessed privilege of being assured that our prayers are heard and answered, according to His own gracious promise, “ Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” And again, “ Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and



it shall be opened unto you;" for "whatsoever ye shall ask in *My Name*, saith the blessed Jesus, believing, ye shall receive."

Again, we read repeatedly, in various parts of Scripture, that *praise* and *thanksgiving* are most acceptable offerings unto our God. "Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he glorifieth Me;" for which reason, David expressly says, in the 50th Psalm, 17th verse, "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." When, therefore, we compare these words with those of St. Peter before quoted, from the 2d chap. of his 1st Epistle, where he says to Christians, "Ye are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, *that ye might shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light*"—we are constrained to acknowledge, that it is "very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places," offer up to God our Saviour the humble tribute of our grateful praise and thanksgiving, for all His undeserved mercies vouchsafed to us. This is what Hosea calls, "*Offering to Him the calves of our lips*," in allusion to the calves offered in sacrifice upon the Jewish altars. And thus we shall have a decisive evidence that we are amongst the number of that chosen and peculiar people, of whom God speaks by the mouth of His servant Isaiah in the 43d chapter, 21st verse, where He says, "This people have I

formed for **Myself**, that they should shew forth **My** praise."

Finally, Every sacrifice of righteousness which we are called upon as Christians to offer unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is briefly comprehended in St. Paul's exhortation to the Roman Christians (12th chapter), where he says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *present your bodies a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" and this solemn dedication of ourselves, as a living or lively sacrifice unto God, is made, be it remembered, by every member of our church, as often as we partake of the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, in these words, "*Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.*"

To enlarge upon all the particular duties and obligations implied in these words, would far exceed the limits of a single discourse. Suffice it, therefore, to remind you, my Christian Brethren, that this unconditional surrender of *ourselves, our souls and bodies*, as a lively sacrifice unto God, which our lips have so repeatedly made, and which it is our "bounden duty to perform," includes in it a devotedness of our hearts and lives to the service of our Heavenly King, a crucifying of our fleshly lusts and passions,

a mortification of every unholy desire and unchristian temper, a bringing every rebellious and impure imagination into captivity to His Divine will, a renunciation of our accustomed pleasures and self-interests, when His glory requires it from us; and, in a word, a following as far as in us lies, the example of the blessed Jesus, in "doing good" to the bodies and souls of our fellow-creatures; as it is written, *to do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* If we, my Beloved Brethren, are thus enabled by Divine grace, to fulfil our solemn promises and vows of devoting ourselves as a lively sacrifice unto our Heavenly Father, by "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," we may be assured, that however imperfect we feel our best services to be, they are washed white in the blood of sprinkling, and ascend as sacrifices of sweet-smelling savour before the throne of Him, of whom it is written, that *"To love Him with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, is better than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifice."*

To conclude, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness," says David, and *"put your trust in the Lord."* So much has been already said in anticipation, with regard to the blessed privilege of "trusting in the Lord," which belongs to all who offer Him those sacrifices of righteousness of which

we have just been considering, that it seems unnecessary to occupy your attention any longer by enlarging upon it. There are two observations, however, arising out of these words, which are very important.

The first is, that if we do *not* offer these sacrifices of righteousness unto God, we have no right or privilege whatsoever to trust in Him; and in this case, if we do presume to trust in Him, we shall certainly in the end find ourselves grievously disappointed; for it is written, "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish."

The second observation connected with this part of our subject is,—that it is not in *our own sacrifices of righteousness* that the Psalmist directs us to put our trust, but in the gracious promises of our Lord and Saviour to accept our imperfect sacrifices, and save us for His Name's sake. And this is, indeed, a sure and unfailing ground of confidence to us, in every possible situation or circumstance in which we may be placed. Yes, my Beloved Brethren—Over times and circumstances we have no control. The events of things in this fleeting world of sin and sorrow, are far beyond our reach. In our own strength, wisdom, or goodness, we can place no confidence whatsoever. And if we trust for help to man, or to creature-comforts, however dear to us, we shall quickly find that we

are leaning upon broken reeds, and that every thing on earth is but "vanity and vexation of spirit." But "amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life," amidst all the difficulties we have to contend with, the dangers we have to surmount, or the tribulations through which we have to pass, on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal glory, as long as we feel conscious that we are habitually offering to God, through Christ, the sacrifices of a truly penitent and contrite heart, together with continual prayers for His mercy, thanks for His favours, and a life of consistent obedience to His commandments; so long we have the blessed privilege of being assured, that our God is "causing all things to work together for our good; both here and hereafter;" and may apply the words of Solomon to ourselves, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON VI.

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A *SCRIPTURAL*  
FEAR OF GOD, AND THAT WHICH IS FALSE  
AND HYPOCRITICAL

PROVERBS I. 7.

*The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of  
Knowledge.*

THE desire of knowledge seems, in a greater or less degree, to be an innate propensity of the human mind. "Vain man, saith Zophar, *would be wise*, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Whether this is to be regarded as one of the consequences of Adam's having tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, or as one of the inseparable concomitants of reason and reflection, remains a matter of doubt; but certain it is, that there is a never-ceasing insatiable craving in the human breast after something new. From the meanest curiosity of the clown, to the sublimest researches of the philosopher, an ardent desire of adding to the stock of ideas is more or less observable in every child of fallen Adam.

Considered simply by itself, without any reference to consequences, this desire of knowledge, so natural to the human race seems neither good nor bad. But when viewed with respect to its object and tendencies, it appears to be a matter of the most vital importance. For constituted as the mind of man is, the creature of education and habit, having nothing to work upon except its own ideas, and indebted for all those ideas to the outward objects with which it is conversant, it follows as a matter of necessity; that a man's moral character must be very much influenced by the nature and degree of his knowledge. For, as on the one hand, it can scarcely be expected that *that* man should be *good* who knows nothing but what is *evil*; so, on the other hand, the more the objects of our knowledge have a tendency to excite holy and profitable ideas in our minds, the greater reason there is (*humanly speaking*) to hope that our characters shall be proportionally exalted and sanctified.

Now the misfortune, my Beloved Brethren, never to be sufficiently deplored is, that such is the depravity of our nature, and such the perversity of our will, that this desire of knowledge, when left to itself, is sure to take an evil direction. Had we been permitted to speculate upon what should be likely to form the most interesting objects of enquiry to a rational creature, placed as man is in

this world of mystery, we might reasonably have supposed, that the *great ends of his being* would have been the first and principal objects of his curiosity. The questions, "What am I?" "Who placed me here?" "For what purpose was I created?" "Whither am I going?" and "What will become of me after death?" would, it might naturally have been expected, have excited his earliest attention. But no, experience, proves that this is not the fact. These are not the subjects respecting which fallen man desires information. His thirst after knowledge is, for the most part, limited to the fleeting perishing things of time and sense; and the utmost of his ambition is, generally, to know those things which may most easily gratify his passions, promote his interest, satisfy an idle curiosity, add to his importance, or procure him applause and admiration in the eyes of his fellow-creatures.

It was probably a train of such reflections as these that drew from the wise monarch of Israel the declaration in our text, which seems to be a most suitable introduction to that series of profitable instructions which he was writing for the benefit of his beloved Son. "*The fear of the Lord,*" he says, "*is the beginning of knowledge.*" That is as much as to say, "The first step to that wisdom which alone is truly profitable to man is,—to fear God." All knowledge, of whatsoever kind



or degree, which does not tend to produce this fear in our hearts, is worthless and delusive. Until a man has learned truly to fear and honour his Creator, he has learned nothing that can be of the least advantage to his immortal soul; and no matter what other knowledge he may be possessed of, no matter whether he be as sage as Socrates, or as profound as Aristotle, he may be assured of this, that "he knoweth nothing as he ought to know it." "Man that is in honour and understandeth not (says David) is like the beasts that perish."

Now these words of Solomon in our text suggest to us, my Beloved Brethren, two subjects for profitable meditation. First, the question, *What is the nature* of that fear of the Lord of which he speaks? And secondly, In what respects this fear of the Lord is to be regarded as the "*beginning of knowledge.*" Let us humbly pray that the blessed Spirit of Truth may be pleased to assist us in these our meditations, and to render them profitable to our souls.

*First*, with respect to the *nature* of that fear of the Lord, of which Solomon speaks in our text. In order to understand this aright, it is to be kept in mind that the word "fear," as it is used in Scripture and in common conversation, has (as we shall see in the sequel, of this discourse) two significations. It either means to fear a thing as an *object of terror*, or to fear it as an *object of*

*reverence.* With regard to that fear which we entertain towards any thing as an object of terror, we may observe that it is usually accompanied by a feeling of dislike and repulsion. For instance, that dread which is so universally prevalent throughout the human race of evil spirits and supernatural appearances, (the origin of which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for on any other supposition than that such things have at one time or another actually existed,) as also that fear which we commonly entertain of a person who has seriously injured us, and who has both the will and the power to repeat the injury; or again, that servile, cowardly, fear which men of base dispositions feel toward a person whom they have themselves injured, and who is likely to retaliate upon them, is for the most part accompanied by a secret feeling of hatred and aversion which, when it has God for its object, so far from attracting us to Him, must, on the contrary, operate to drive us from Him.

Of such a nature was that fear of God which influenced the mind of unhappy Adam immediately after his transgression, when he heard His voice, and ran trembling to conceal himself amidst the trees of the garden; "I heard Thy voice," he says, "and I *was afraid*, because I was naked, and I hid myself." What a striking picture of a

guilty conscience-struck sinner, who loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil!"

Of such a nature also was that fear of God which operated on the mind of guilty Felix, so as to make the haughty magistrate shake with terror while the Apostle reasoned before him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." This is that "Fear" of which St. John justly says, that "it hath torment." Proceeding as it does from a consciousness of unrepented sin, and from well-grounded apprehensions of the infinite justice and holiness of Almighty God; it torments the sinner's mind with the most dreadful forebodings of Divine vengeance; "with a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary." This is not that fear of the Lord of which Solomon speaks in our text, because such a fear as this is, as we daily see, quite compatible with a determined course of ungodliness. It is, in fact, nothing more than the workings of our natural conscience, and there are probably few men in the world, not excepting even the most depraved, who do not at some seasons experience, in a greater or less degree, this unholy and tormenting fear of God, as an implacable adversary, an all-powerful and justly incensed Sovereign, prepared to take

vengeance upon their iniquities. It was such a fear as this that the idolatrous Samaritans experienced, of whom we read in 2 Kings xvii. that, "*They feared the Lord and worshipped their graven images.*" It is such a fear as this that actuates too many professing Christians to perform certain acts of formal devotion, (such as daily reading a portion of the Scriptures, and attending upon the outward forms of Christian worship,) while at the same time they cling to their darling pleasures, and continue in contented subjection to evil tempers and a worldly spirit. Yea, even the devils themselves are powerfully influenced by this kind of fear, for we are informed that they "believe and tremble!" And verily, my Brethren, it is not without reason that this unholy fear of God, which is always more or less the companion of a guilty conscience, causes those who experience it to tremble; for His wrath is positively revealed against all "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" and the Psalmist assures us, that "*hereafter as a man feareth, so is His displeasure.*"

And here it does not seem extraneous from our subject to observe, that there cannot be a more decided proof of the universal depravity of human nature, and of that "enmity to God," which is a characteristic of the unconverted mind of fallen man, than the fact, that those nations which have never been blessed with the light of revela-

tion, have all for the most part worshipped the unknown Deity, under *images of terror*, and have endeavoured to appease His wrath, if not (as in many instances) by offerings of human blood, at least by the daily repeated sufferings of innocent victims.

Hence proceeds that multiplicity of animal sacrifices which swell the annals of pagan superstition. Hence arises the vain imagination, by no means uncommon in barbarous countries at the present day, of a man's "*offering to God his first born as an atonement for his transgressions, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.*" Hence spring forth the Molochs of the ancients, and the Juggernauts of the moderns. And to this origin, likewise, may be traced that vast multitude of penances or penal ordinances of human invention, which overload and disgrace that many-headed monster of corruption, the Church of Rome.

Is it not, my Beloved Brethren, easy to discern, under all these, a latent consciousness universally prevalent, that man is an apostate, a rebel against his Creator; and that *that* Creator dare not be approached by his guilty creatures, without an atoning sacrifice wherewith to appease His vengeance? What is the whole history of heathen mythology and pagan superstition, but a virtual confession that man is a sinner, that, "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and that

“without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This fear of God, therefore, which proceeds from the workings of natural conscience, and which drives men to such absurd and horrid methods of mitigating His wrath, *while at the same time it leaves their minds still under the dominion of ungodly passions and tempers*, cannot be regarded as the “beginning of knowledge,” but as the effect of spiritual ignorance and superstition.

What unspeakable reason have we, my Christian Brethren, to bless the Lord for having of His free undeserved mercy, delivered us from this “gross darkness,” and shone into our benighted hearts, “the glorious light of His Son’s Gospel.” How should we praise and adore His holy name for not having left us to perish in our natural ignorance and blindness, but having taught us to know Him, as “God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us!” “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!” “In Him we have redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” “His precious blood cleanseth us from all sin; and by the sacrifice of Himself, once offered, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Having thus considered the nature and effects of that fear of God, as an *object of terror*, which proceeds from the workings of a guilty conscience,

which operates so as to make men regard Him as an implacable adversary, and drives them to superstitious and formal methods of appeasing His wrath; we proceed, in the next place, to the consideration of that fear of the Lord as an *object of reverence*, of which Solomon declares in our text, that it is the beginning of knowledge, and of which David also speaks in Psalm cxi. 10. where he says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do thereafter, the praise of it endureth for ever."

And first let it be noted, that this holy fear of God is uniformly represented by the inspired writers as accompanied with, or rather imbedded in its very nature, a dutiful submission to His divine will, and a conscientious observance of His commandments. This indeed follows as a matter of course; for the child that sincerely loves and venerates his parents, will make it the great business of his life to manifest his affection for them, by a willing submission to their authority; and this not from a servile dread of their displeasure, but from a filial sense of duty and a sincere desire to please the beloved authors of his existence. The subject also who feels a real reverence toward his earthly sovereign, will prove that he does so, by paying due respect to the laws by which he governs; and this not so

much from fear of legal punishment, as from innate loyalty of heart and love of good order. And again, the respect which we feel for persons whose characters are eminent for goodness and talent, usually operates so as to make us anxious to obtain their good opinion, and fearful of doing any thing that might appear base or dishonourable in their eyes. It is very obvious, I say, my Brethren, from all these instances, that the feeling of fear or reverence existing toward a person, is quite consistent with that *love* which, while it "casteth out all servile fear of his wrath," at the same time, produces respectful submission to his authority.

Of such a nature, therefore, is that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge." It combines in its essence a filial love to God and a dutiful obedience to His commandments, as our *Heavenly Father* and the bountiful Author of all the blessings we enjoy; with a profound reverence toward Him as our *Almighty Sovereign* and heart-searching Judge, before whose tribunal we must one day stand; together with a hearty desire to obtain His divine favour and blessing, as the supreme source of all goodness and happiness—Himself the highest good of all! This is that fear of the Lord of which David says, that it is "*clean* and endureth for ever." This is that fear of God of which Solomon says, that it is "*to hate evil*," and to "*depart from evil*." Thus it was



that all his saints of old manifested their fear of the Lord. Joseph has left us a memorable example of this, "godly fear" in his answer to his adulterous mistress, "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!*" whereby he evidenced the truth of that declaration which he afterwards made to his brethren, "I fear God." A noble confession! May it be the habitual language of all our hearts! It is written, moreover of holy Job, "that he was a man who *feared God and eschewed evil.*" And, once more, Cornelius the centurion has this honourable testimony recorded of him, "that he was a *devout* man, who *feared God* with all his house; which *gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.*"

Thus we see, my Brethren, from these and various other instances, too numerous to mention, that the holy "reverential" fear of the Lord, of which we are speaking, is of such a nature as not to drive us from Him as from an implacable adversary, in servile terror of His vengeance; but on the contrary, to *draw us to Him* with filial love, and dutiful obedience to His commandments, as to a reconciled God, whose name is "Love"—Who hath taught us, by His Spirit, to call Him *Abba, Father.*" And so inseparable are these two things, namely, the holy fear of the Lord, and a conscientious obedience to His laws, that the sacred Penmen for the most part mention them together.

Thus we find Moses repeatedly exhorting the children of Israel to "Fear the Lord and serve Him, and walk in His ways." And the language of Solomon, in the last verse but one of the Book of Ecclesiastes, is very remarkable. After enumerating the various trials he had made of the power of the good things of this world to confer happiness, and confessing that he had found them all to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit," he says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

We learn from all this, my Beloved Brethren, that whatever "fear" we may feel toward God, which is not accompanied *by a consistent course of godliness*, is spurious and hypocritical.

We now proceed, in the last place, to consider in what respects this fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. And this we shall find it is in *two* respects. First, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, because it proceeds from that right *knowledge of God* as He is revealed in the Gospel of His dear Son, Jesus Christ, which *commences in this world* with faith in that Gospel, and is *perfected by vision in the world of glory*. "This is life eternal," saith the blessed Jesus, "to *know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*" It is in vain for us to say that we fear God, as long as we remain without

that true knowledge of Him which only proceeds from a cordial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners. To possess this holy, filial, reverential fear towards an *unknown* God, of whom we can only form a mere abstract or speculative notion in our minds, is impossible. The Athenians of old made the experiment. They set up an altar to Jehovah, under the title of "the unknown Deity," and thereby, as Paul declared to them, only added to their superstition.

For this reason, my Brethren, if we desire heartily to fear the Lord, we must first of all be brought to a right acquaintance with Him. And this, as I said, can only be obtained by looking to Him as revealed in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who is the "brightness of His glory and the express image of His person," and who came upon earth for the purpose of bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of His Heavenly Father, and of their only way to obtain His divine favour. As He Himself declares in John xiv. 6. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me;" and, again, Luke x. 22. "*No man knoweth the Father save the Son; and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.*" Let us therefore, my Beloved Brethren, make our humble approaches to Almighty God, in and through this blessed Saviour, who hath thus positively declared Himself "The Way,

the Truth, and the Life," and who graciously says, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Let us penitently acknowledge our own guilt and ignorance of God. Let us lay hold, by faith, on that covenant of free forgiveness and reconciliation with His Father, which He hath sealed with His own blood. And let us earnestly beseech Him to enlighten our dark understandings, by a saving knowledge of His truth, and to renew our depraved hearts "after His own image, in righteousness and true holiness." Thus we shall become heirs of that precious promise which the Lord Jehovah makes with His believing people in Jeremiah xxxii. 40. where he says respecting them, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good, and I will put *My fear in their hearts*, that they shall not depart from Me." And thus alone, namely, by the renewing, sanctifying operation of His Holy Spirit upon our minds, through faith in the Gospel of Christ crucified, we shall become possessed of that "Fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and that knowledge of the Holy One which is understanding."

The other respect in which it may be truly said that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, is, on account of the *peace* and *satisfaction* of mind which it imparts to those who possess it. For what, let us ask, is the end which men propose

to themselves by the acquirement of knowledge? Without doubt it is their own happiness and satisfaction. They feel an inward craving for something, they know not what; and they seek to add to their knowledge, if peradventure they may thereby satisfy this inward craving which they experience, and so attain to contentment and *peace of mind*.

But, my Beloved Brethren, this is a vain expectation. There is nothing which can possibly satisfy the desires of our immortal souls, except the pardoning mercy and love of our God; and as long as we remain uninfluenced by that holy fear which we have just been considering, i. e. as long as we continue in our natural state of rebellion and enmity against Him, it is absolutely impossible for us to enjoy His divine favour, and, consequently, so long it is impossible for us to experience true peace or satisfaction of soul. "For the wicked (saith Isaiah) are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt continually; verily there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Hence it follows, that the only knowledge that can make us truly happy, is that knowledge of God in Christ which influences our hearts so as to make us love and fear Him. This is the beginning of that wisdom which is from above, which is "*first pure, then peaceable,*" and which alone

can make us “wise unto salvation.” By this we are first taught to know our own danger as guilty sinners, and also the inestimable love of God in sending His dear Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to redeem us; and this “beginning of knowledge” on earth, by which we know “in part” a little of our own condition and of the mysteries of redeeming love, will be completed in heaven, where we shall know “*even as we are known.*” Of all other knowledge it may be truly said, in the language of the wisest man that ever lived, that, “In much wisdom there is much grief, and whoso increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” But of that knowledge which leads us heartily to fear the Lord and keep His commandments, the same divinely inspired writer justly declares that its price is inestimable; “She is more precious than rubies, and all things that thou canst desire are not to be compared with her.” For with it all the blessings and privileges of God’s Holy Word are exclusively and inseparably connected. “It shall be well with them,” says Solomon, “that fear God.” “He honoureth them that fear the Lord, both small and great.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant.” “Yea, Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generations of the righteous shall call him blessed.”

Thus we see, that this fear of the Lord is indeed, as Isaiah says, "a *treasure* to the man that possesses it." "In this fear of the Lord there is strong confidence." "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Yea, "better is a *little* with the fear of the Lord, than great riches and trouble therewith."

Let us therefore, my Dear Brethren, diligently examine into our hearts and lives, to ascertain whether we possess this fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge. Let us compare what has been said respecting its nature and effects, with what passes in our own breasts. Let us beware of that hypocritical fear of the Lord, which leaves us still under the power of our sins, and makes us adopt the form of godliness, while we deny the power thereof. And let us never rest satisfied with our own state, until we have attained such a *right knowledge* of God, in and through His dear Son Jesus Christ, as will influence us habitually to draw nigh unto Him in our hearts, with "*reverence and godly fear*, for our God is a consuming fire!"

*New to God the Father, God the Son, and  
God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON VII.



ON DEATH.

PSALM XXIII. 4.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*

THE life of a Christian has been well compared to a pilgrimage, or wearisome journey, in which he has to pass through a great variety of dangers and tribulations, on his way to the heavenly Jerusalem ; where is laid up for him the treasure that his heart aspires after, and to which he looks forward with the cheering expectation of enjoying therein a glorious and eternal rest from all his labours.

But before the Christian pilgrim can enter upon this heavenly Canaan, or promised land of rest and rejoicing, there is a deep and fearful valley to be crossed, which separates this world from the next, and which is called by the Psalmist in our text,



*"the valley of the shadow of death ;"* which name he probably applied to it in allusion to the description that Job had before given of it, in the 10th chapter, 21st and 22d verses, where he calls it "A land of darkness and of the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death; without any order, where the light is darkness."

This name, with the description accompanying it, which both the Patriarch and the Psalmist have applied to the mystical valley that separates time from eternity, is certainly calculated to inspire our minds with gloomy ideas, and originated probably in the supposition that Death, that grisly monster whom Job calls "the king of terrors," overshadows this fearful valley with his wings, so as to prevent the least glimmering of light from penetrating it. But whatever may have been the origin of the name, the *fact* is certain, not only that death is fixed like a great gulph between this world and the next, but also that the thought of our being obliged to cross this gulph, is for the most part associated with feelings of sadness and apprehension in our natural minds; and this for three reasons—*First, because of the pain we usually associate with the idea of dying—Secondly, because of its obliging us to bid a last farewell to this world, and all the beloved objects of our affections—and, Thirdly, because it intro-*

*duces us into an unknown and eternal state of existence.*

Considering death in this threefold character, it must be confessed that nothing is more natural than that the thought of it should excite feelings of dejection and disquietude in the natural mind of man; and that it does so, when *seriously entertained*, the experience of most people testify. But there is this remarkable difference observable between mere worldly or unconverted men, and those who, through faith in the blessed Saviour, are made children of God, viz. the former dislike to entertain a *serious idea* of death in their minds, the latter are *habitually* meditating upon and preparing themselves to meet it; yea, and are enabled, in a great degree, to overcome their natural repugnance to it.

The feelings of unconverted men with respect to *the act of dying*, vary according to their different constitutions and circumstances. The timid shrink from it with horror, on account of the suffering supposed to accompany it; the courageous are not afraid to encounter it in any shape, nay they frequently court it in its most dreadful forms; those whose hearts are strongly attached to this world, cannot endure the reflection that they must one day quit it for ever; those, on the other hand, whose circumstances have weaned them from the love of this world, either regard their departure

from it with indifference, or else long for it as a supposed termination of their misery.

But, however the feelings of worldly men vary with respect to the act of dying, they all agree in this, that they *dislike to retain a serious impression of death upon their minds*. Even those who possess most of that animal courage, which can lay claim to no merit, since it is shared in common with the senseless brute; and which enables its possessor to endure the actual pain of dissolution without shrinking, are yet (as experience proves) equally averse with the most timid, calmly and seriously to meditate upon it, with all its *probable or possible* consequences. They are not afraid *to die*; but they are afraid *to realize death to their minds*. The idea of it, they say, is gloomy. It has a tendency to shake the nerves. It is soon enough, they affirm, to think of dying, when the time of doing so actually arrives, and till then, they would rather banish the recollection of it entirely from their minds! Some regard it as a *necessary evil*, and since they cannot escape from it, are determined to endure it manfully. Accordingly they prepare themselves for it, by making their wills, and arranging their worldly concerns; speak of it occasionally as "*the debt of nature*;" which must sooner or later be paid; but, in the mean while, their looks and manner plainly betray the confession, "*that the less they think or talk about the subject*

*the better.*" Others are ready to die when called upon in the cause of honour, avarice, or ambition; nay, when their passions are strongly excited, they frequently rush upon death with eagerness, "like the horse rushing to the battle;" but coolly and deliberately to contemplate their departure from this world in *all its bearings*, and still more to live in *the habitual contemplation of it*, would seem insupportable even to the most intrepid of them.

Hence it is, that many who are best able to brave death in all its terrors, amidst the tumult and excitement of a field of battle, are frequently found to tremble at the expectation of it in the silence and solitude of a death bed. Their courage is of that brutal nature which prompts them, as it were, to rush *blindfold* upon destruction, but not of that rational kind which enables them calmly to look death in the face, and calculate (if we may so speak) all the *chances* of futurity. And although we may sometimes meet with a noisy bravado, or pretended philosopher, who, by his boastings or reasonings on the subject of mortality, seems an exception to this rule; yet if we saw these men in their closets, and could read the secret workings of their hearts, when *surprized* with the prospect of imminent destruction, we should find that death was not without its terrors, even to them.

For though pride and the love of applause may

in this, as in every other instance, counteract the natural feelings of the human mind ; and though the *habit of witnessing spectacles of mortal suffering* does (as in the case of the military and medical professions) in some degree, *steel the heart against them* ; yet if we attentively scrutinize the words and actions of unconverted men, (including nominal Christians amongst the number,) we shall find it a rule scarcely admitting of exception, that the *serious idea* of death is disagreeable to the natural mind of man. The poet and the speculator may inflame their imaginations with romantic dreams of Elysian happiness—the hardened fool, who says “Tush, there is no God ;” may talk very plausibly about death, as annihilation or eternal sleep—the warrior may vaunt loudly of the immortal fame which follows it, when encountered in the field of battle—the wretch who feels life a burden, may endeavour to solace himself with the thought that when he dies his sufferings will be for ever at an end—the formalist and nominal Christian, whose religion is a lifeless carcass, utterly devoid of sincere faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, may strive to fortify themselves against the fear of dying, with some vague indefinite notions of the *infinite mercy* of God—(quite forgetting that He is as infinitely *holy* and *just*, as He is merciful ;)—and the conscience-struck sinner, driven to despair, may eagerly seek to drown his apprehensions of divine

vengeance in profane scoffing, drunkenness, and revelry. But it is the glorious privilege of the regenerate and spiritually minded believer in God's Word *alone*, to be able to say from his heart, in the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*"

These words, my Beloved Brethren, naturally lead us to consider, *First*, What the state of the Psalmist's mind was when he wrote them. *Secondly*, What it was that produced in him this state of mind. And, *Lastly*, To make a practical application of the subject to our own hearts individually. And may the Lord bless it to all our souls !

*First*, with respect to the state of David's mind when he wrote the words of our text. We may observe, that he does not shrink with terror from the idea of dying ; but, on the contrary, entertains and reflects upon it with coolness and deliberation. He first realizes to his mind the solemn fact, that he must "walk through the valley of the shadow of death;" and then prepares himself, with holy fortitude, for the passage. As if he had said, "Though I were *even now* walking through the valley of the shadow of death, as I know that I one day must, still I am determined to be afraid of nothing, for I am sure that no evil can happen unto me. Its darkness shall not terrify me, neither

shall any thing that I may meet with on the way dishearten me. I am resolved to pass through this black and dismal valley boldly and cheerfully. Why? Because *Thou*, oh my God and Saviour, art with me. Thy gracious presence shall cheer my fainting spirits; the light of Thy countenance shall illuminate my dreary path; the rod of Thy omnipotence, shall defend me from all the powers of darkness; and the staff of Thy redeeming love shall comfort and support my trembling soul, through all the pains and terrors of dissolution, until it is safely arrived at the happy region of light, glory, and immortality."

Such, my Beloved Brethren, seems to be the substance of the Psalmist's words in our text; from which we may collect further, that while he thus contemplated his own death with holy courage and composure of mind, he at the same time regarded it in some degree with the *natural feelings of a man*. His determined fearlessness to meet it, by no means proceeded from that vain-glorious contempt of death, which is so much applauded by most worldly people; and which, where it is not mere pretence, is the mark of a profane and reprobate mind. It is no token of true courage, and still less of true religion, my Brethren, to despise or think lightly of death. Considered in whatever point of view, it is, without doubt, an evil—awful and terrible to flesh and blood; and as such our

Creator intended it should be regarded ; otherwise He would not have pronounced it to be the consequence and penalty of sin. For "by one man," we are informed, "sin entered into the world, and death *by sin*, and so death has passed upon all men, *children* as well as adults, forasmuch as *all* have (in Adam) sinned."

Hence we learn that death, considered simply as the dissolution of our mortal bodies, is indubitably a curse: "The wages of sin *in this world* is death." And, as "fools alone make a mock at sin," so also is it a manifest proof of depraved infatuation, to make a mock or speak lightly of that which is the consequence of sin. One thing is certain, that they who affect to speak most contemptuously of it, have in reality the greatest reason to dread it: yea, it is set down in Scripture as one of the characteristics of "the wicked," that "*they have no bands* in their death;" that means, they frequently *appear* to meet it as a trifling matter, and without the pains and terrors which others experience from it.

But such is not the case with those who really fear God, and believe His word. Such was not the case with the good king Hezekiah, of whom we read (38th chap. of Isaiah) that he *wept sore* at the thoughts of dying, and prayed earnestly to be delivered from it. Such was not the case with the blessed Jesus, of whom we are informed, that His



sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, and that He thrice petitioned His Heavenly Father, that *if it were possible* His cup of mortal agony might pass away from Him. Or if this be not admitted as a case in point, let us take David himself, as an instance of death being terrible to the natural mind of man. Hear what He says in the 55th Psalm, "*My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me, fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.*" And again, in the 116th Psalm, "*the sorrows of death* compassed me round about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found *trouble and heaviness*; then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." Or once more in the words of our text, "Though I walk through the valley of the *shadow* of death." He acknowledges, we find, that it was *a valley of shadow*, a land of *darkness and gloominess*, which tended to excite dismal forebodings in his natural mind. But though this was the Psalmist's natural view of it, *yea*, though as the most terrible evil, the highest point of the climax of mortal suffering that could be imagined, he *must walk through the valley of the shadow of death*; still, whatever others might do, "*he should fear no evil.*"

Seeing then, my Brethren, that this fearlessness with which the Psalmist contemplated his dissolu-

tion, was by no means the result either of apathetic indifference, nor yet of fool-hardy desperation; from what, let us ask, did it proceed? This leads us to the *second* consideration proposed, namely, What it was that produced in David this blessed frame of mind which dictated the words of our text? And the answer to this question will be found in the preceding verses of the Psalm from which it is taken.

“*The Lord,*” he says, “*is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*” It was the consciousness that he was one of the Lord’s sheep, the certainty that he was under the ever-watchful care of the “Good Shepherd,” and defended by His Almighty power, which inspired the Psalmist’s mind with such intrepidity at the thought of death; for if the Lord was indeed his Shepherd, i. e. his guide and protector, he knew that he could want no good thing, either living or dying. He had found, from blessed experience, that “*there is no want to them that fear Him.*” “He maketh me,” he says, “to lie down in green pastures,” i. e. He supplied him with abundance of temporal and spiritual nourishment, as a careful shepherd brings his flock to the most verdant part of the field. “He leadeth me beside the still or gently-flowing waters,” alluding to those ordinances of grace and out-pourings of the Spirit, with which his soul was from time to time cheered and comforted, as with those refresh-

ing streams to which the shepherd leads his flock, when panting beneath the heat of the noon-day sun. "He restoreth my soul," that is; He renews it continually in spiritual health and holiness. For David, although distinguished by the honourable appellation of "the man after God's own heart," had been, like all the rest of fallen Adam's posterity, "by nature a child of wrath," "shapen," as he says, "in iniquity, and conceived in sin;" yea, not only this, but he had been moreover a grievous and inexcusable backslider from God. "He had gone astray from Him like a lost sheep." He had sinned "*horribly*" against the clearest light and conviction of his own conscience. He had disgraced his holy profession, and "given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme," by committing the two most abominable and, in his case, aggravated crimes of adultery and murder. Thus his iniquities had, as he bewails, "gone over his head, they were too many for him, they were a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear."

But then, David's repentance had been as sincere as his guilt was aggravated. His humiliation had been as profound as his iniquities were inexcusable. His confessions had been as ingenuous as his offence was heinous. And his cries to God for mercy had been as fervent and unceasing as his danger seemed imminent and his fears insupportable. Nor was his deep repentance in vain,

nor his fervent prayers unanswered. The blessed declaration, that "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity," was abundantly verified in David's experience. *The Lord had heard his petition, the Lord had received his prayer,* the Lord also had "*put away his sin,*" and had *restored his guilty soul to spiritual health and peace.* And the decisive proof that He really had done this, — that which alone gave the penitent monarch of Israel the assurance that his offended God had indeed restored unto him "the joy of his salvation," was the fact, that He was *now leading him in the paths of righteousness, or holy obedience to his commandments, for His Name's sake*; i. e. not on account of any merit or worthiness which he saw in him, but for the glory and praise of His own great name, as proclaimed by Himself on Mount Sinai; — "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, but by no means pardoning the guilty (or impenitent).*"

It was, I say, my Brethren, the experience of this blessed truth, that produced in David this happy frame of mind, which enabled him to contemplate death without alarm. He was able to say with holy confidence, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall

I, be afraid?" The same Almighty and all-gracious Shepherd, who had "kept him from his youth up to the present day," who had protected him by his pastoral care; and wrought such miracles of grace in his soul, would not, he was confident, fail him nor forsake him in his greatest extremity. But as the shepherd with his crook and staff both guides his flock and defends them from enemies; so likewise the Heavenly Shepherd by His all-sufficient grace and power, will safely conduct His faithful servants through all dangers, and make them more than conquerors, even over the king of terrors himself. Thus we find, that (as Isaiah says) *the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*

We now proceed, in the last place, to make an application of the whole subject to ourselves individually. And here permit me, my Beloved Brethren, with all that solemnity which the subject deserves, to put the question to each of your consciences, *What are your feelings with respect to death?* To tell you that you must all, like David, pass through the valley of the shadow of death; would be unnecessary, for you know it already. Equally superfluous would it be, to remind you of the *uncertainty of life*, for the experience of every day awfully verifies the words, that "*in the midst of life we are in death.*" The race we find is not

to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The youngest and healthiest among us cannot tell, when he rises in the morning, but that before night he may be in eternity. Seeing then that this is confessedly the case, permit me, my Dear Brethren, solemnly, to ask each of you, Have you ever calmly and seriously meditated upon your approaching dissolution? Have you ever *realized death to your minds*? Have you ever gravely examined whether you are prepared for that awful hour, when you must finally leave this world, exchange time for eternity, stand before the judgment-seat of your heart-searching God, and hear from His lips the irrevocable sentence which shall doom you either to everlasting happiness or everlasting misery?

You reply, perhaps, that these questions make no impression upon you;—that the idea of death excites no alarm or uneasiness in your mind;—that you feel yourself quite prepared for it whenever it arrives, and are accustomed to regard it with indifference, sometimes even to wish for it. Beware, my Brother, lest you are not fatally deceiving yourself; many a man has wilfully shut his eyes to the most imminent danger, and wished for that, which *when obtained, occasioned his irreparable ruin*. You say you feel prepared to die! Let me ask, *How are you prepared?* Does your preparation agree with what the word of God de-

clares to be necessary? Have you been *born again of the Spirit*? Has God the Saviour *restored your soul to spiritual health*, and is He *leading you in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake*? My Dear Brethren, these are no light questions, but, on the contrary, demand the gravest consideration of every one of us. It is universally admitted that *probability is the rule of life*. For as no event is certain under the sun, we must and do submit to be guided in all our actions by that which seems *probable*; and the bare likelihood, or *possibility* of success, is esteemed a good reason for our being in earnest and diligent in our several pursuits. Surely, then, my Brethren, if this be so in the comparatively trifling concerns of this world, much more should the *probability* (or even *possibility*) that *you possess an immortal soul, which must one day stand before the judgment-seat of its Creator, to be rewarded or punished by Him, according to the rules laid down in His Holy Word*, be a sufficient reason for your being earnest and diligent in making preparation for such an awful event. For oh, consider, I beseech you, how unspeakably dreadful must be the consequences, if, after all, Death should meet you in an unprepared state, and you should find, when too late, that there is a *resurrection* and a *judgment*, that there is an *eternity* and a *hell*!

You reply, perhaps again, that these are *gloomy*

subjects, and that you do not wish to think or speak about them. I ask you if the bare idea of them is gloomy, what must be the *reality*! Can you for a moment suppose that the awful realities of death, judgment, and eternity, become *less* terrible, from your not thinking about them? Or that the danger can be avoided, by your closing your eyes against it?

Besides, even admitting that the thought of these things causes you to feel uneasy, and fills your mind with sadness, ask yourself, I entreat you, which is preferable—to endure a little temporary uneasiness *here*, by seriously preparing for death—or to suffer eternal and inconceivable torment hereafter, for not being prepared to meet it? Which of these two sentences sounds most terrible in your ears? That of the prophet Amos to the rebellious Israelites, “PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!” or that of the Judge on the last day, to those who have died unbelieving and impenitent, “DEPART FROM ME YE CURSED INTO EVER-LASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS!” “*The prudent man, (saith Solomon,) foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished!*” Oh that men were wise that they would ponder these things, that they would consider their latter end!

To conclude—To you, my Beloved *Christian* Brethren, who, like David, live in habitual con-



templation of your final departure from this world, and whose earnest prayer and endeavour it is, "*so to number your days, as to apply your hearts unto that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation*—To you, I say, my Dear Brethren, who sincerely believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the words of our text are calculated to afford certain and unspeakable consolation. For we, my Brethren, live under a clearer and brighter dispensation than even David himself. If the religion of believers under the Old Testament dispensation enabled them to overcome their natural dread of death, much more should the religion of the adorable Son of God enable *us* to overcome it! For He hath now "brought life and immortality to light, by His glorious Gospel." He is that "*Good Shepherd*" that came from heaven to seek and to save His lost sheep, by dying for their sins, and rising again for their justification. His precious body and blood, received and eaten by faith, is the food which nourishes our souls unto eternal life. His quickening, sanctifying, Spirit which He freely imparts to all who seek for it, is that ever-flowing river of living water, of which, "*whosoever drinketh shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life and glory.*" He it was who, for our sakes, passed through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and willingly subjected Himself to all its

pains and terrors, in order that “through death He might overcome him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and thus deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” And He it is who, having triumphantly burst the bands of death and the grave, and gained an illustrious victory over all the powers of darkness, is now exalted high upon a throne of glory at the right hand of His Father; where He reigns for evermore, having all power committed unto Him in heaven and earth, and from whence He is continually addressing His believing people in the words of His Gospel, and of His faithful ministers—“Look unto me and be ye saved. I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whoso liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die.”

The great question, therefore, my Brethren, which it remains for us to ask ourselves is—Are we amongst the number of “*His chosen sheep*,” of whom He says, “*My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me*?” Do we indeed hear and obey the voice of this our good and heavenly Shepherd? Are we faithfully and habitually looking up to Him as our Guide, our Saviour, our Master, who hath “bought us unto Himself with His own precious blood which cleanseth us from all sin.” Does our preparation for death agree with

that which His Holy Word directs? If we are conscious that we have, like David, "Erred and strayed from his ways like lost sheep, followed the devices and desires of our own hearts, and offended against His holy laws;" are we also conscious that He hath by His new-creating Spirit restored our souls to holiness and peace with God, and that we are now following Him in the ways of humble penitence, and sincere obedience to His commandments? If our consciences testify that this is indeed our case, though we should be immediately called to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil; for even there our good Shepherd shall be present with us; "I am with you always," He says, "even unto the end of the world." And again, "Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." His grace, which has been "sufficient for us in life," will not fail us in death, when we most stand in need of it. And "His strength, which is made perfect in weakness," shall be our unfailing staff of support when all other supports are taken away.

"Jesus can make the death-bed seem

Softer than downy pillows are."

He can and does fill the souls of His people, when about to leave this world, with such comfortable

thoughts, such sweet assurances of His mercy and love, such lively anticipations and fore-tastes of eternal blessedness, as frequently causes the time of death to be the happiest season of the Christian's life, and enables many who had looked forward to it with dreadful forebodings to meet it not only with fortitude, but even with rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Thus it is that, as David says, 116th Psalm, "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,*" yea, "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.*" "*My sheep,*" saith the blessed Jesus, "*hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of My Father's hand; I and My Father are one.*"

What a glorious assurance is this, my Christian Brethren! How well calculated to support and cheer us both in the prospect and experience of our mortal agony! What a blessed privilege, to know that if we indeed belong to Christ's flock of faithful and obedient people, whom He is "*leading in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake,*" we can never perish! Nothing, not even death itself, can pluck us out of His almighty hand. For "*He giveth unto us eternal life.*"

Observe, He *giveth it* unto us, as a free unmerited boon. "*The wages of our sins is death*, but the GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. Living or dying we are His property, purchased unto Himself with His own precious blood." As St. Paul saith, "Whether we live we live unto the Lord, or whether we die we die unto the Lord, so that living or dying we are the Lord's." "Our life is now hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

With reason then, my Dear Brethren in Christ, may we sing aloud with the Apostle, "Oh Death where is thy sting! oh Grave where is thy victory! The sting of Death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Wherefore, my Beloved Brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON VIII.



THE CAUSES OF, AND REMEDIES FOR, A CHRISTIAN'S DESPONDENCY.

PSALM XLII. 11.

*Why art thou cast down, oh my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

SOLOMON observes, in the 27th chapter of Proverbs, that “as in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man.” Without pausing to examine the critical signification of these words, we may remark that, spiritually understood, they are very applicable to the Lord’s people in all ages of the church; for scarcely does face answer to face more exactly than the experience of one believer corresponds with that of another. Let me not, however, be understood to assert that the experience of all Christians is precisely the same. Without doubt the difference of

ages, constitutions, outward circumstances, and degrees of grace, gives occasion to an infinite variety of frames and feelings in the breasts of the Lord's people; so that in this respect, to carry on the metaphor, we may say that there is perhaps as great a diversity between the religious perceptions of Christians, as there is between the features of their countenances. But what I mean to say is, that the *leading features* of their experience are similar. There is, generally speaking, an identity of feeling to a certain extent pervading all the members of Christ's spiritual-body, consisting in the consciousness, more or less, of the same joys, the same griefs, the same hopes, the same fears, the same pleasures, and the same pains, all proceeding from the operation of that "one and the self-same spirit," which inspires the whole with life and energy, and "divideth unto every part severally as He will."

And herein, my Beloved Brethren, consists, as I humbly conceive, one very strong internal evidence of the truth of the sacred Scriptures, viz. the extraordinary accuracy with which they depict the various workings of the human heart, both in a state of nature and in a state of grace. Inasmuch, that when we read the accounts which they have recorded of what Moses, or David, or Paul felt, or said, or did, on such and such occasions, we see our own feelings and characters laid open before

us as in a mirror, so exactly that we are almost tempted to exclaim, "that is precisely *my* feeling, I am sure I should have acted in the very same way were I placed in the same circumstances." In this respect at least *our own experience* testifies that the Word of God is a *matter of fact book*. It describes human nature as we find it really is, not as poets and philosophers have falsely represented it. It gives us no high-wrought colourings of a *perfect* virtue or of an *uninterrupted*, and therefore imaginary happiness to be attained in this world. But with all the naked simplicity of truth, it holds up the characters of the persons described in its sacred pages exactly as they were, without either extenuation or detraction; so that their graces may serve as models for our imitation, their vices as checks to our presumption, their chastisements as beacons to warn us from sin, their consolations as motives to encourage our perseverance, and in a word, that by a comparison of our own religious feelings and character with theirs, we may thence discover what probability there is that the same spirit of grace, which wrought so effectually in them, worketh in us also.

These reflections seem to be suggested by considering who the individual was from whom the words of our text proceeded. "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" "Who is the person, let us ask,



that speaks in such desponding terms?" "Is it some poor melancholy outcast in the last stage of human wretchedness?" Far from it. It is no less a personage than the divinely inspired monarch of Israel; he who was distinguished by the honourable appellation of "*the man after God's own heart*;" and who seems to have enjoyed a nearer communion with God, and to have been favoured with a more abundant outpouring of the spirit, than any other mere mortal has ever been favoured with before or since. Seeing then that this most eminent of the Lord's saints was not without his seasons of disquietude and despondency—surely, my Dear Brethren, it need be no cause either of surprize or alarm if we have ours. On the contrary, the more closely our experience agrees in this respect with David's, and the nearer we can trace our own griefs and disquietudes to *the same causes from which his proceeded*, the greater may be our confidence that we are in some degree abtainted by the same life-giving spirit.

With respect to the Psalm from which our text is taken, it was manifestly composed under the "hidings of God's countenance," seeing that the disconsolate state of the composer's mind is illustrated by one of the most expressive comparisons that can be imagined—"As the poor hart that has been long chased by the hunters over the solitary plains of Palestine, panting with heat and wear-

ness, longs for some cool refreshing stream, out of which to quench its thirst, even so did David's soul, persecuted as he was by blood-thirsty enemies, pant and sigh after that sweet communion with God, which he had once enjoyed, but from which he was now separated." Yea, so distressing was his experience of the withdrawing of his wonted spiritual privileges and intercourse with his Heavenly Father, that his soul, as he says, was "sore pained within him," and, as it were, "melted with very heaviness," while his insulting enemies, who had conspired with his unnatural son Absalom to drive him from his kingdom, taunted him with reproaches, as if God had forsaken him altogether. Happy are they who thus long and pant after closer communion with God! Yea, blessed are they who thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. "If any man thirst," saith our Lord, "let him come unto *Me* and drink; whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

In this downcast and desponding state of mind, the question which the Psalmist puts to his soul in our text may be understood as a kind of expostulation with it, for thus giving place to such gloomy imaginations. As if he had said, "How foolish is it, oh my soul, to be thus cast down in despondency

at thy comparatively light afflictions! How unbecoming one who has been favoured by God with so many kind providences and especial privileges as thou hast, to be thus troubled and dispirited by the temptations of the enemy! For shame, oh my soul, thus to dishonour thy God, by doubting for a moment, either His will or His power to save thee! Banish for ever such unworthy thoughts of Him! Hearken not to the tempter, who thus endeavours to drive thee to despair; by suggesting notions so derogatory to the goodness and faithfulness of thy covenant Jehovah! Bounce thyself from thy spiritual indolence, and review His merciful dealings with thee in times past. Call to remembrance thy long experience of His loving-kindness and protection, and let the recollection of this encourage thee still to hope and place confidence in Him, who has always proved Himself "the health of thy countenance and thy God."

Now this account of the Psalmist's frame of mind, when he wrote the words of our text, suggests to us, my Brethren, such a variety of interesting matter as it would be difficult to comprehend within the limits of a single discourse. In the first place, it clearly establishes the fact, that occasional despondency, so far from being inconsistent with a state of grace, is on the contrary *more or less the accompaniment and evidence of it*. And, indeed, the whole tenor of the Word of God serves to confirm this assertion.

Nothing is more decidedly opposed to a saving knowledge and belief of divine truth, than that hard, *stout-hearted*, unbending habit of mind, which knows not what it is to be cast down and mourn in secret places, under the hidings of God's countenance. Indeed, such a state of mind is described by David himself, in the 10th Psalm, as the characteristic of a wicked or unconverted man, "who through the pride of his heart will not seek after God." "Tush," he says, "*I shall never be cast down*, there shall no harm happen unto me;" and it is to such characters that the Prophet Isaiah addresses himself, (in the 46th chapter, 12th verse,) when he says, "Hearken unto me ye *stout-hearted*, that are *far from righteousness*." When we compare these, and other passages of similar import, with those of an opposite tendency, such as that in the 51st Psalm, 17th verse, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, Oh God, Thou wilt not despise;" or that in the 57th chapter of Isaiah, 15th verse, "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit*, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;"—or again, "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and *of a contrite spirit*, and trembleth at My Word;"—or once

more, with the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye that mourn, for ye shall be comforted. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh"—We can have no doubt that a dejected and sorrowful spirit, though by no means a *certain*, is at least a *surer* indication of a right state of heart than the contrary.

Doth any conscientious and upright believer feel inclined to reply, "If this be so, I have great reason to doubt the reality of my conversion, for my heart still continues hard, and my spirit unbroken, so that I am a stranger to those dejections of soul which others experience?" I would ask such a one, Is not this very thing a source of humiliation to you, my Brother? Do you not *grieve to think that you can mourn so little* for your sins? Does it not incline you to doubt your own safety? Does it not excite you to be more fervent and constant in prayer to the throne of grace, and to rejoice *with trembling*? If so, you have no reason to be discouraged.

David himself was not always wallowing in the mire of despondency. He too had his seasons of self-elevation and prosperity, in which, as he says in 30th Psalm, 6th, 7th, and 8th verses, "I verily thought I should *never be moved*. Thou, oh God, by Thy favour hast made my mountain to stand strong." But mark what follows, "*Thou didst*

*hide Thy face and I was troubled. Then cried I unto Thee, oh Lord, and gat me to my God right humbly.*" A decisive proof this that he really loved the Lord. For the child that loves its parent will mourn and weep when he turns away his face in displeasure; but hard-hearted and rebellious children, like Absalom, place no value whatever on their parent's affection, and are alike indifferent both to his smiles and frowns. In like manner, the man who has no true love of God in his heart, will suffer no anxiety whether he possesses His divine favour or not; while those who have indeed received the spirit of adoption, teaching them to call Him, "Abba, Father," feel that the enjoyment of His love is the "*One thing needful to their peace.*" Their language, when they experience it, is that of triumphant praise and exultation, and they rejoice while they walk in the light of His countenance. But presently a black cloud of unbelief, or carnal-mindedness, shoots athwart their souls and darkens the scene. Then all is doubt and gloominess; and the language of the believer's heart is, "Oh, that it were with me as in months past, when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked in darkness" — "Return, Oh, Lord, how long?—" "Lift up the light of Thy countenance and I shall be whole!" Now it is precisely to a person placed in such circumstances as these, that the words of Isaiah are

addressed, (50th chapter, 10th verse,) "*What shall is there among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.*"

Time will not permit us to enlarge more copiously on this part of the subject. Let us therefore, my Brethren, in the next place, direct our attention to the principal causes of rejection to the people of God. And the first that suggests itself to our minds is, that alarm and despondency which the awakened sinner frequently experiences, when he is first (through the teaching of the Holy Spirit) brought to a knowledge of his own state and desents, as an offender against the law of God. At this critical season, Satan, like a strong man armed, finding that a stronger than he has dispossessed him of his empire in the sinner's heart, struggles hard to regain possession of his lost dominion, and exerts his diabolical ingenuity to the utmost, in order to drive the penitent to despair. To effect this object he sets all his sins in dreadful array before his mind's eye, and paints them to his conscience in the most terrific colours. He suggests to him that his case is singular and desperate, and that it is in vain for him to repent or hope for forgiveness. He tempts him to think that he has committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy

Ghost, and that there is nothing before him but a "certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation," which awaits him as the inevitable punishment of his crimes. More particularly if the individual be a *backslider*, one who has committed numerous and heinous sins against the convictions of his own conscience; in this case the enemy redoubles his exertions, by every possible means of terror and distraction, to *cast down his soul* into the pit of despair.

But, my Beloved Brethren, (if there be any amongst us who feel this description at all applicable to themselves,) let us not be thus cast down by any suggestions or artifices of the enemy. Satan has been a "liar and the father of lies from the beginning," and we may regard it as an infallible rule, of universal application, that no matter how great may have been our sins, or how vile our characters, *whatsoever would hinder us from repenting and returning to God through Christ, is a lie and a device of Satan*. We are positively informed (by Paul, in the 17th chapter of Acts, 30th verse,) that "*God commandeth all men, every where*, (no matter what may have been their characters and circumstances) *repent*." If, therefore, repentance be, as it is here declared to be, the *duty of "all men,"* it necessarily follows, that whatsoever keeps us from the performance of it, is a temptation of the devil.



It is no apology for the neglect of this great duty of repentance to say, that the exceeding guilt and number of our sins prevents us presenting to hope for acceptance with God. This is altogether a delusion of the tempter. It is positively declared; that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin," and that "He is highly exalted by God's right hand, to give repentance and forgiveness of sin." Of His power to save us there can be no doubt, because He is "*the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*"—"Able," as the Apostle asserts, "*to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.*" And of His will to save us, His own blessed words are the strongest possible evidence, "*Come unto me,*" He says, "*all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*"—"Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Art thou a weary heavy-laden sinner then, my Brother? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"—"Repent, and be converted, and thy sins shall be blotted out." Art thou, like Paul, "*the chief of sinners?*" Know thou, that "*Where sin hath abounded, grace does much more abound.*" Yea, "Though thy sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they have been red like crimson, yet shall they be as wool." Or, once more, Art thou a backslider? Hast thou sinned against light, and against the

convictions of an awakened conscience? Beware of despairing of the mercy of God, or of disbelieving either the will or the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. This would be the *most heinous sin of all*, because it would be virtually giving the lie to His own promises. That unbelief which finally drives the sinner to despairing impenitence and rejection of God's mercy, is, in fact, the *only unpardonable sin*. The blessed Jesus, who is Truth itself, expressly says, "*All manner of sin and blasphemy (save that against the Holy Ghost) shall be forgiven unto men.*" Now unbelief of His Gospel (when it is final) *sins against the Holy Ghost*, by persisting to deny the truth of His words, and thereby blaspheming the Spirit by which they were dictated.

And with respect to sins committed against light, though, without doubt, more heinous, there is most assuredly nothing more *unpardonable* in them than in any others; the decided proof of which is, *the fact* that almost all the Lord's people, whose histories are recorded for our instruction in the Sacred Scriptures, were more or less backsliders. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Solomon, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Jonah, Peter, the incestuous, but deeply penitent member of the Corinthian church, who was, by Paul's express direction, re-admitted to the communion of the saints—all were backsliders. And to mention but

one instance more—Oh what an ~~abominable~~ backslider was David himself, the man after God's own heart! What a dreadful advantage did the enemy of souls obtain against him, when he successfully tempted him premeditatedly to commit the crimes of adultery and murder. With reason might the Psalmist cry out, as he does in the 51st Psalm, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head, they are too many for me, they are a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear." But yet, grievous and insupportable as the burden of David's guilt undoubtedly was, it by no means caused him to despair of pardon; on the contrary, it made him the more earnest and fervent in humble supplications to the throne of grace for forgiveness and acceptance—"Pardon mine iniquity," he exclaims, "*for it is great!*" "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee?" And mark what blessed consequences resulted from his persevering prayers of faith and penitence. "*Praise the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, praise His holy name: praise the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy.*"

Let us not, therefore, my backsliding and penitent Brethren, suffer our souls to be cast down in despair or "over-much sorrow" as though God

had entirely forsaken us, and for ever "shut up his tender mercies from us." But while we mourn with a "*godly sorrow*" for our transgressions, "let us at the same time take comfort from the declaration of St. John, that "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins!" And again—"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." "Let us then hope even *against hope*, that through the all-sufficient propitiation and intercession of the blessed Jesus, we shall yet praise Him who is the health of our countenance and our covenant God."

Another cause of dejection to the Lord's people is that grievous burden of *indwelling* sin, and that never-ceasing conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which all who are really regenerate do more or less experience. We have each of us, my Dear Brethren, too much reason to acknowledge, with shame and sorrow, that "in us there dwelleth no good thing." There is, as Paul says, "a law in our members continually warring against the law of our minds." When we would do good, evil is present with us." When we desire to be active and zealous in the service of our God and Saviour, we feel our hearts cold, indolent, and lifeless. When we retire into our closets for the sake of holding spiritual communion with our Heavenly

Father, and studying His Holy Word, our minds are immediately crowded with vain imaginations, which distract our thoughts and hinder our devotions. . . We cannot pray as we wish to pray. We cannot love God as we feel we ought and desire to do. . . We cannot adhere constantly to our good resolutions. . . We cannot in all things live up to the light of our consciences. . . We are not able to glorify God by bringing every rebellious temper and desire of our minds into complete captivity and obedience to His divine will. . . Our lives are (in a sense) little else than one continued course of sinning and repenting, confessing our sins and then committing fresh ones. . . So that we all have too much reason to cry out with the Apostle, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But thanks be to God, who always canst us to triumph in Christ Jesus. . . *"His grace is sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness."* . . . However frequently "cast down" in our conflicts with our spiritual enemies, we have reason to bless the Lord that we are "*not yet destroyed.*" . . . When we said our foot slippeth, Thy mercy, oh God, held us up. . . Let us therefore not give place to gloomy or desponding thoughts, on account of our manifold corruptions and short comings, but let us remember the blessed declaration of the Apostle, *"God made Him to be sin*

*for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."* And again, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, unto every one that believeth.*" However vile we feel ourselves to be, our adorable Saviour is "altogether lovely," and His Father sees us *in Him* clad in the robes of His own all-perfect righteousness, "*without spot or blemish or any such thing.*" We are therefore privileged to adopt the triumphant Song of the Old Testament Church, in the 61st chapter of Isaiah, and say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me in the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with a robe of righteousness."

Again, "*In this world* (saith the blessed Jesus to His disciples) *ye shall have tribulation.*" And so we find it, my Beloved Brethren. The causes of tribulation to the Lord's people, while passing through this "vale of tears," to the heavenly Canaan, are numerous, or rather innumerable. The universal prevalence of ungodliness and misery throughout a fallen world—the unconverted and perishing condition of many of our dearest friends and relatives—the bodily sufferings and death of those who are dear to us—the multiplicity of our cares and anxieties—the distresses and disappointments which we meet with in our temporal affairs—the persecution we undergo

*on account of our religion*—the trials and privations, the pains and infirmities which are more or less matters of daily experience with every one of us—all these sources of anguish, I say, combine and operate so as frequently to oppress our minds in deep dejection, and cause us to cry, with David, “Oh my God, my soul is cast down within me.”

But “Blessed are they who sow in tears, for they shall reap in joy.” “Blessed are they who passing through the valley of weeping use it for a well, *the pools thereof are filled with water.*” It is “good for us, my Beloved Brethren, to be thus afflicted.” It teaches us to see the vanity and worthlessness of all earthly things. It prevents us from wishing to take up our rest in this perishing world. It makes us cleave more closely to the promises of our covenant God, as our only permanent source of peace and consolation. “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,*” saith David, “*but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*” Even “in the midst of the sorrows we have in our hearts, His comforts from time to time refresh our souls.” In all our trials and tribulations, however severe, we have still unspeakable reason to rejoice, “*that though the Lord hath chastened and corrected us, yet He hath not delivered us over unto death.*” Meditation upon a long course of undeserved favours,

and unexpected deliverances in times past, should inspire us with cheerful anticipations of the future. "Yea, His own words are a never-failing source of hope and encouragement to us in all our sufferings." *"In Me ye shall have peace."* "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Call upon Me in the time of trouble I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

Let us then, my Dear Brethren, "glorify our God even in the fires" of tribulation and adversity, by placing the most implicit confidence in His good will and power to deliver us. Let us imitate the conduct of Job in his afflictions, and say, *"Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."* Let us remember, that "as a father chastens his children, so also the Lord chastens those He loves." Yea, "as a father *pitieth* his children, even so the Lord *pitieth* them that fear Him." For He knoweth our frame, He remembers we are but dust. "He doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." "He will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able, but in every temptation openeth also a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind;" and He hath promised that *"as our day is, so shall our strength be."* "His anger endureth but for a moment, and in His favour is life; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy



cometh in the morning." If we stedfastly believe His word, and trust to His gracious promises, we may be assured, that all these our comparatively light afflictions are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For thus it is written, "*He causeth all things to work together for good to those that love Him and are called according to His purpose.*"

Lastly, *the fear of death* is very frequently a source of unspeakable dismay and dejection to the souls of the Lord's people. It made the good king Hezekiah weep like a child, and caused the Psalmist to exclaim, that "the terrors of death had fallen upon him, and that a horrible dread had overwhelmed him." But in this, as in every other instance, it is our glorious privilege, my Christian Brethren, "*Though sorrowful, to be always rejoicing.*" Yea, by faith we are enabled to triumph even over the king of terrors himself, and to say with the Apostle, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." He hath brought life and immortality to light "*by His glorious Gospel.*" He hath burst the bars of the grave, and "*through death overcome him that hath the power of death, that is the devil.*" Wherefore, my Beloved Brethren, whensoever we feel our souls dismayed and cast down with fears respecting

our dissolution, let us imitate David's example, by calling to remembrance all the Lord's mercies and deliverances manifested towards us in times past, and say with him, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*"

Thus, my Christian Brethren, we see in what respects we may truly say that "God in Christ is the *health of our countenance*, and our God." As for ourselves, indeed, we have "*no health in us*, the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint;" but Jesus is the Heavenly Physician who has provided a balm for all the wounds of our hearts, and a medicine for all the diseases of our souls; "This is the rest, and this is the refreshing wherewith He causeth the weary to refresh themselves;" and to this rest He invites every weary and heavy laden soul to come. Therefore, whatever may have been the cause which has disturbed our souls from this blessed rest, we should take courage and say, "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt mercifully with thee.*" "*Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.*"

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON IX.



THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST  
BEING PRECIOUS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE  
IN HIM.

1 PETER II. 7.

*Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.*

THERE is no mistake more general, and at the same time more dangerous in its tendency, than the supposition, that all who have been baptized into the Christian Religion, and who attend upon the forms and ordinances of Christian worship, are therefore *believers* in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For exclusive of the absurdity of imagining that a few words repeated over us in our infancy, or a few prayers occasionally offered up with our lips in the Name of the Son of God, are sufficient to entitle us to participate in all the glorious blessings and privileges which the New Testament holds out to those who believe it; there are, moreover,

certain tests or marks repeatedly set forth, both by our Lord Himself and his Apostles, by which we are directed to prove and "examine ourselves," whether our professed faith in Him be of the right sort or not. For if those tests or marks be not found in us, it follows, either that faith in the Saviour has changed its nature, and does not now operate in the same manner that it did in the early ages of Christianity, or else that *we do not heartily believe in Him.*

For example, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, 5th chapter, describes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as "working by love." "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *faith which worketh by love.*" Thereby signifying, that all who truly believe in Him as their Saviour, do also sincerely *love* Him as such. It follows, therefore, my Brethren, that if our professed faith in Him does not "*work by love,*" it certainly is not of the same nature with that which the Apostle was describing. And yet he declares, in another place, that there is but "*one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*" &c.

Again, the words of St. Peter, in our text, furnish us with another decisive criterion of true faith in the Son of God—"Unto you therefore *which believe He is precious.*" The word "*precious*" is one of the most significant expressions that could possibly have been employed to describe

the *inestimable value* which sincere faith causes us to set upon the Saviour. And the inference that we necessarily draw from these words is, "*If the Lord Jesus Christ be not precious to me*"—If I do not see an *excellency in Him* infinitely superior to all earthly objects—If I do not *set a value upon Him* inexpressibly higher than that which I set upon any other person or thing, my faith in Him is not sincere—I cannot, in this case, be a *believer* in the Son of God, because, "*To those who believe in Him he is precious.*"

Now these words suggest to us, my Beloved Brethren, to consider, in the first place, the *reasons* why the blessed Jesus is thus, as the Apostle asserts, "*precious*" to all who believe in Him. And secondly, the *manner* in which this "*preciousness of the Saviour*" manifests itself in the hearts and lives of those who experience it. May His own Spirit of Truth be graciously pleased to direct and sanctify our meditations, so as to render Him indeed *precious* to all our souls!

First, I say, we are led to consider the *reasons* why the Lord Jesus Christ is, "*precious*" unto all who believe in Him. And this we shall find He is, for *three* reasons; first, on account of what He *has* done for them; secondly, on account of what He *is* doing for them; and thirdly, on account of what He *will* do for them.

The Lord Jesus Christ, I say, is precious to be-

lievers, First, on account of what He *has* done for them. For what has He done for us, my Christian Brethren? He has *made our peace with God!* He has delivered us from the dreadful consequences of our sins! He has obtained for us the greatest benefit that it is possible to conceive, even the promise of everlasting life, and an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of glory! And all this He has procured for us, be it remembered, at the expense of His own inconceivable humiliation and suffering, which is another consideration that contributes to render Him *precious* to the hearts of believers.

Consider what the blessed Jesus had to endure in order to accomplish the redemption of His people. He who was *essentially* “in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God”—He who “in the beginning was with God, and was God”—“The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last”—“By whom and for whom all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth”—“He who was thus (as touching His Godhead) in glory equal and in majesty co-eternal with His Father,” did for the love which He bare to our guilty souls, “make Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him *the form* of a servant, (which expression evidently implies, that He became *as really a servant* as He had been *really God before*; for if He had not been *really God*,

He must have been *always a servant*, inasmuch as all God's creatures are His servants) "and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Oh, my Beloved Brethren, how little can we know or conceive of that love for souls, which animated the bosom of the adorable Saviour, when He thus condescended to veil His divine glory under a covering of flesh and blood; to mingle with the most vile and abandoned of our fallen race, thus in a sense becoming *identified with sinners and familiar with sin*, which was of all things most abhorrent to His holy nature; to submit to such inconceivable disgrace and suffering, that, had He not been supernaturally upheld, His exhausted frame must have sunk beneath it; and finally, to yield up His life as a common malefactor between two thieves, amidst the insults and scoffs of His blood-thirsty enemies! Little, I say, can we conceive of that marvellous love of the Son of God to our souls, which excited Him to do and to suffer all these things for such vile, such polluted, such worthless creatures as we are, whom He might justly had left to perish in our sins, as withered branches fit only to be burned. Truly doth the Apostle say of this love, that it "*passeth knowledge*." Its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, exceed the comprehension of a finite

mind; and the more we reflect upon it, the more we perceive how infinitely short our most enlarged conceptions fall of the reality.

But although the love of Christ to our souls be thus incomprehensible as to its *degree*, yet with respect to its *consequences*, it is gloriously conspicuous and intelligible. By thus making Himself incarnate, and subjecting Himself to all the wants, infirmities, and sufferings of our fallen nature, He has, as our "Second Adam," or Covenant Head, restored to us all those blessings which the first Adam had by transgression forfeited both for himself and his posterity. By becoming in all things obedient to the will of His Heavenly Father, and fulfilling the whole law in so perfect a manner, that "*no sin could be found in Him*," He thus, as our Representative, wrought out for us a *perfect righteousness*, which we by faith can, as it were, lay hold upon, and appropriate to ourselves individually. Therefore, as "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so likewise by the obedience of one have many been made righteous; for "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth*." By patiently enduring such complicated sufferings of mind and body, encountering the most horrible temptations wherewith Satan could assault Him, and yielding Himself up to the most cruel torments and the most ignominious death which His enemies



could inflict upon Him, He thereby "*made Himself a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law.*" "His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion," have been accepted by His Father, as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of all that believe in Him; and "there is now *no condemnation* to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And finally, by bursting the bands of death, rising victorious from the grave, and ascending triumphantly to that world of glory from which He had formerly descended, He hath set the seal to the entire work of His people's redemption, He hath "*abolished death, brought life and immortality to light,*" and opened to the believer's eye the cheering prospect of a glorious and a blissful eternity.

All this, I say, my Brethren, the adorable Saviour hath already accomplished for those who *believe* in Him, for *sincere faith* is all that is required to make these blessings our own. "*He that believeth shall be saved.*" He has in this manner been manifested unto us as "*the well-beloved Son of God, elect and precious in His sight.*" Of whom He speaks by the mouth of His servant [Isaiah (42d chap. 1st verse), "*Behold my servant whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth.*" This is He of whom the Prophet foretels, when he says, "*Behold I lay in Zion for*

a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a *precious corner-stone*. He that believeth shall not make haste (or be confounded)." It is to Him the Psalmist addresses himself, when he says, "*Thou art fairer than the children of men*, grace is poured into Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever." And it is of Him also that the Apostle speaks in our text, when he says, "Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is *precious*."

And is not the blessed Jesus indeed precious unto us, my Christian Brethren, for all that He hath done and suffered for us? Most assuredly He is, or else *our faith is vain*. As health is precious to the sick; as liberty is precious to the captive; as light is precious to those that walk in darkness; as food is precious to the famishing; as hope is precious to the miserable; in a word, as complete salvation is precious to the wretch trembling on the brink of destruction; so also is Christ crucified *precious*, yea, inestimably valuable to every self-convicted sinner that heartily believes in Him.

For He is that heavenly physician who descended to impart spiritual health and strength to our diseased souls. He is that "Holy and Anointed One of God," who was sent to "preach deliverance to the captives of Satan, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that were bound" in the fetters of sin and guilt. He it was that came upon earth to "open the blind eyes;"

“to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” He is that “living bread which came down from Heaven, that whosoever eateth thereof might have everlasting life, and He will raise them up at the last day.” It is His *precious promises* alone which can inspire wretched mortals with that blessed hope of life, and glory, and immortality, which we who believe have as “an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering within the veil” that hides the eternal world from our view. And, in a word, it is His all-powerful grace, which alone is sufficient to overcome the evil propensities of our depraved nature, to rescue us both from the curse and the dominion of our sins, to turn our wandering feet from the paths of guilt and misery into the ways of holiness and salvation, and thus to “snatch our souls as brands out of the burning.” Wherefore, my Beloved Brethren, if we so believe in this adorable Being as thus to *feel our need of His salvation*, and experience His almighty power to save us from our sins, He will most assuredly be *precious* to us, and that *in exact proportion to the strength of our faith in His Gospel*.

But again, the Lord Jesus Christ is moreover *precious* to believers on account of what He is *still* doing for them. For what, let us ask, is the blessed Saviour doing for His believing people? He is, my Christian Brethren, *doing every thing*

*for us!* And a glorious reflection this is ; for we are poor, miserable, helpless creatures, that can do nothing for ourselves without His aid, as He himself declared to His disciples, “ *Without Me ye can do nothing.*”

Could we, for a moment, imagine, that when the Son of God had finished the work of redemption upon the cross, and ascended up to His throne of glory, He then, as it were, forsook His people, and left them to stand or fall, to be saved or lost, according to their own merits and exertions, we should in this case have little reason to esteem Him precious ; because, through the exceeding sinfulness and infirmity of our natures, salvation would still be, to us, as unattainable as it was before : yea, rather (if I may be allowed the expression) it would be *much more unattainable*, seeing that His Gospel, instead of lowering the standard of holiness, on the contrary, exalts it far above the level of legal morality ; instead of offering salvation to men for obedience to a *mitigated law*, it on the contrary establishes the spirituality and perfection of all God’s commandments, and exacts obedience to every jot and tittle of them by the most awful sanctions. If, then, as the Apostle declares, it was impossible for a man to be “ justified by the works of the law” under the Old Testament dispensation, much more is it impossible for us to be “ justified by the works of the law” under the New Testa-

ment dispensation. If the Lord Jesus Christ, by His incarnation and sufferings, did nothing more than place us in a "*salvable state*," and then, withdrawing all care and assistance from us, left us completely to ourselves in "working our salvation," His Gospel, so far from being, as its name imports, "*Glad tidings of great joy to sinners*," would rather be like Ezekiel's roll, a message of "lamentation, and mourning, and woe," seeing that it instructs us, both by precept and example, to aim at *perfect holiness*, and sets before us the dreadful alternative of eternal perdition if we fall short of it.

But no, my Christian Brethren, far be it from us for a moment to entertain such hard and unworthy notions of our blessed Saviour. His care for us has not ceased with His mortal life. His work of love was not finished when He withdrew His bodily presence from His church. He is still working both *for* us and *in* us. He is working for us as our Great High Priest, by His *prayers* and mediation with His Heavenly Father. "He ever liveth," saith the Apostle, "to make intercession for us;" and it is by virtue of His prayers and intercessions alone that all spiritual and temporal blessings are imparted to us. He is working for us, moreover, by His Almighty power, which He exercises as *King* of His redeemed people. "All power," He says, "is committed unto Me in heaven

and in earth;" and by this Almighty power He causeth "all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose." By His power He bruises and dashes in pieces all the enemies of Himself and His church. By His power He removes all difficulties and impediments in the way of our salvation. By His power He raises up a succession of faithful pastors and teachers amongst His people. By His power, He causes His word to go forth "quick and powerful" to the utmost corners of the earth, so that the wilderness and the solitary place are made glad by it, yea, the desarts rejoice and blossom as the rose. By His power He provides abundant means of grace for us, even in the most unlikely and unpromising places. In a word, by this Almighty power, "He is," as His servant Paul affirms, "able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

And as the blessed Jesus is thus continually working *for* us, my Brethren, by *His power*, so is He also working *in us* by *His Spirit*, by which He constrains us both "to will and to do of His own good pleasure." It was by His Spirit, that when we were dead in sin, He first quickened us into spiritual life, inspiring our minds with that desire after holiness, which has wrought such a marvellous change in our hearts and lives. It was by His Spirit that He first taught us to see our

lost estate by nature, and inclined us earnestly to seek for His salvation. It was by His Spirit that He caused our hearts to melt, and our eyes to overflow with godly sorrow for our sins, and by which He brought us upon our knees, crying "Abba, Father," in humble prayer for mercy and acceptance. It was by His Spirit that He weaned us from the love of those perishing vanities, in which we once took so much delight, and enabled us both to resist and overcome those evil desires and propensities to which we were once in such disgraceful bondage. And it is by the same Spirit that He still maintains spiritual life in our souls, and will do so to the end. In this respect He is our *Life*; as the Apostle says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." He is our *Head*; "*we are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones*;" and from His fulness we still continue to receive, and grace for grace. He is our *All*. We are *complete in Him*. Our faith in Him, if sincere, both unites us to Him, and gives us the right to participate in *the unsearchable riches* of His grace.

By faith in Christ we lay hold upon His all-sufficiency. By faith in Christ we become interested in His precious promises. Through faith in Christ we have daily imparted to us fresh supplies of grace, to help in every time of trial and necessity. Through faith in Christ our weakness is

turned into strength, our sorrow into gladness, our fears into hope, our complaints into praises, our despondency into encouragement, yea, our very infirmities into causes of triumph and rejoicing, so that we may say with the Apostle, though in an inferior sense, “we can do all things *through Christ who strengtheneth us.*” And if we be indeed thus vitally united to our Lord by a sincere faith, we have His own words to assure us, that “nothing can separate us from Him.” He has chosen us unto Himself, through faith and the sanctification of His Spirit unto obedience, and *none can pluck us out of His hand.* Our enemies are His enemies, and “He that toucheth us, toucheth the apple of His eye.” “He that believeth in Me,” He says, “*hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*”

And is not the blessed Jesus precious to us, my Christian Brethren, for all these things? Doubtless, if we *are believers*, we shall feel that He is so. The deeper our experience of our own sinfulness and helplessness, the more precious will this Almighty Saviour appear in our eyes.

When we feel the remembrance of our guilt pressing heavy upon our consciences, how precious to us is His declaration, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men!”—How valuable that “blood of the new covenant which



cleanseth us from all sin!" When a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and the grievous burden of indwelling corruption, weighs down our souls into the dust of despondency, how precious is His invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out!" In seasons of deep affliction, when all earthly comforts fail, how precious to hear Him saying to us, "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." "I will pray the Father for you, *and He will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever!*" In the hour of sore conflict with our spiritual enemies, when Satan, the world, and our own lusts seem to rise up in arms against our souls; how precious His declaration, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness!" How cheering to call to mind, that we have in Him a "High Priest that *can* be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for in that He suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted!" When our earthly friends forsake or turn against us, how precious to hear Him say, "Lo! I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world!" "Whosoever will do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother!" When we are not able to pray for ourselves, how precious to think that *He is praying*

*for us*; that “His Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;” that “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is also the propitiation for our sins!” And, once more, when this world seems fading from our view, when our mortal agony appears fast approaching, when the “fear of death comes upon us, and an horrible dread overwhelms us,” how precious does He appear in our eyes as the “*Lord of life and glory, who is gone to prepare a place for us in His Father’s kingdom,*” and hath declared his unalterable purpose of “*raising us up on the last day, and bringing us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also!*”

This is the *third* reason why the blessed Jesus is precious in the eyes of His believing people, namely, on account of what *He will do for them*. And what will He do for us, my Christian Brethren? “*He will change our vile bodies into the likeness of His own glorious body,* according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” He will change death into life, corruption into incorruption, dishonour into glory. He will exalt us to that blessed place where He Himself is gone before, where we shall “hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon us nor any heat, but the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne,

shall lead us beside fountains of living water, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." And is He not precious to His people for these reasons? Ask the *dying believer* whether the Saviour be not precious to him, and he will tell you, that "*He is chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.*"

Having thus discovered the *Reasons* why the Lord Jesus Christ is *precious* unto those who believe in Him, both living and dying, we now proceed, in conclusion, to consider the *manner* in which this preciousness of the Saviour manifests itself in the hearts and lives of those who experience it; by which also we may examine ourselves, and ascertain whether He be or be not precious to ourselves individually.

And, first, If Christ be precious to us, my Beloved Brethren, *His words* will also be precious to us, as the words of a beloved but absent friend. We shall take delight in reading of Him, hearing of Him, and speaking of Him. We shall make His Holy Scriptures our habitual study, and desire in all things to take them as our rule of life and doctrine. The language of David will best express the feelings of our hearts in this respect, "How sweet are Thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey unto my mouth." And, again, "Oh, how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day"—"The law of Thy mouth is better unto

me than thousands of gold and silver." This is that wisdom of which Solomon says, "*She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*"

Again, if Christ be precious to us, *His salvation* will also be precious to us. It will be the "*pearl of great price*"—the "one thing needful to our happiness." We shall be willing, if necessary, to part with every thing we possess—our friends, our property, yea, our very lives themselves, rather than renounce our claim to it. The value which we set upon it will be exactly proportionable to the value we set upon *our own souls*; and as the whole world would not be able to compensate us for the loss of our souls, nor any thing that could be offered us seem an adequate exchange for them, so likewise the whole world could not (if Christ be precious to us) compensate us for the loss of *His salvation*; nor would we accept any thing which the richest monarch on earth could give us, as an equivalent for it. Thus it was with Paul; "I count all things loss," he says, "*for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do judge them to be but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the

law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And such will also be the language of our hearts, my Brethren, if the Lord Jesus Christ be really precious to us. In this respect we see that the value we set upon the Saviour, may be accurately measured by the value of those things which we are willing to renounce for his sake.

Further, If Christ be precious unto us, *His glory* will be precious to us also. Knowing that we are not our own, but bought with the price of His "*most precious blood*," we shall heartily desire to glorify Him with our bodies and spirits, which are *His*. "His love will constrain us to live not to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again." We shall esteem it our highest honour and privilege to devote both our bodies and souls, as far as we are able, to His reasonable service. We shall earnestly desire to manifest our love to Him by keeping His commandments, remembering His own words, *He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me*. We shall be careful to avoid every thing that can grieve or offend Him. We shall mourn because we cannot serve Him as faithfully, nor value Him as highly as we ought to do, (for this is a certain indication of Christ's being precious to us, my Brethren, *when we sincerely desire to feel Him more so, and*

*are not satisfied with ourselves for prizing Him so little.)* And we shall abhor the idea of claiming any praise or merit to ourselves for any thing we do, but will gladly ascribe every thing connected with our salvation “*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which alone hath made us to differ.*”

Lastly, If Christ be precious to us, His *ordinances* and His *people* will also be precious. We shall esteem a day spent in His house and in His worship, better than a thousand. We shall love the society of all that love Him, and delight in holding communion with them, and joining them in offering Him praise and adoration. We shall spread abroad the knowledge of His grace, and “speak of the great things He hath done for our souls” to all around us. We shall look upon the meanest member of His body as our friend and brother, and rejoice to do him good for the Lord’s sake. And, finally, we shall be anxious, as far as in us lies, to extend His kingdom, and to induce our friends and fellow sinners to esteem Him equally precious as we do ourselves.

Thus it is that true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ uniformly “*works by love!*” And exactly as far as we feel Him thus precious to our souls, so far, my Beloved Brethren, we have the evidence within ourselves that we sincerely believe in Him. Let us, then, seriously examine ourselves by this

rule, and so judge of the reality of our faith. As for the people of this world, the Son of God possesses "no form nor comeliness in their eyes, nor do they see in Him any beauty for which they should desire Him."

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON X.



FAITH IN CHRIST, WORKING BY LOVE,  
PRODUCES HATRED OF SIN.

PSALM xcvii. 10.

*Oh ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the  
thing that is evil.*

THERE are (in a *religious point of view*) two descriptions of persons in the world; those who love God, and those who do not love Him. And the difference between these two kinds of persons, is as plainly manifested by their characters and habits of life, as the difference between good and bad trees is proved by the qualities of the fruit which they produce.

Those who sincerely love God, although (comparatively) but in a small degree, evince the sincerity of their love to Him in a manner similar to that in which their affection to their fellow-creatures is displayed. They love to see Him, to hear Him, to speak with Him, to praise Him, to associate with those who love Him, and, in a word, to



please Him to the utmost of their ability, by endeavouring to love what He loves, and to hate what He hates. Those, on the other hand, who do not love God, manifest their want of love to Him in the same way that a want of affection for any other object is displayed, namely, by a marked dislike, or at least *indifference*, to every thing that relates to Him. They neither love to see Him, hear Him, speak with, or praise Him. They feel a decided repugnance to the society of those who love Him. And take no pains whatsoever, either to do the things which please Him, or to refrain from those things which are offensive in His sight.

Now, it is to the first mentioned class of persons that the Psalmist addresses the exhortation in our text, "Oh ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil;" which words suggest to us, my Beloved Brethren, to enquire, in the First place, Who they are that may properly be said *to love the Lord*; and, Secondly, What are the reasons or motives which induce those who love Him, to hate the thing that is evil.

First, we are led to enquire who those persons are that may be properly said to love the Lord. And we shall find, on a careful investigation of the subject, that they are those alone who were *first loved by Him*;" "We love Him," saith St. John, "*because He first loved us.*" The heart of fallen

man, in its natural state, experiences; unhappily, no feeling of love to its Creator. It is, on the contrary, alienated from Him from the very womb, and if permitted to continue unrenewed by grace, would pass from the cradle to the grave without a single spark of this holy affection. For, besides the impossibility of feeling love to an *unknown* Being, so far removed in His infinite perfections both from our sight and comprehension, it is also necessary to the experience of love, to any object, that we have an adequate *cause* for loving it, such a cause, namely, as not only acts upon our understandings, but also upon our affections.

Now the bare knowledge of the Almighty's existence furnishes us with no adequate cause for loving Him. On the contrary, we find that by far the greater number of those who acknowledge the existence of God, do yet prove, by their words and actions, that if they do not *positively* hate Him, they do so *practically*; so far as endeavouring to banish Him, as much as possible, from their thoughts is an evidence of hatred. And a very remarkable proof of this "*enmity* which (as St. Paul declares) exists in the natural mind of man against the Creator, is the fact that the greater part of mankind have been always accustomed to worship Him under the most hideous and disgusting images. The idols which heathen nations have made to represent the unknown Deity, are sufficient

demonstrations of the feelings which they entertain toward Him. And even where their visible representations of Him are less frightful, the cruel and superstitious practices with which their worship of Him is accompanied, prove that they regard Him with feelings of terror, not of love.

Nor does that knowledge which revelation affords of His perfections, and of the relation in which we stand to Him, as our Creator, Preserver, and Governor, produce any *practical* change in our feelings respecting Him. The abstract ideas which we are thereby taught to form of His goodness, power; wisdom, and holiness, are indeed sufficient to convince our reason that we *ought* to love Him, but are totally unable to influence our *hearts* in such a manner as to make us do so. And though, when we hear it declared to be the *first and great* commandment, that we should "Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength," our understandings immediately assent, and we acknowledge that it is our duty so to do, yet our affections remain unmoved. The perception of our obligations to love God, is not sufficient to enkindle this holy flame in our breasts. Our hearts are naturally too strongly attached "to things below," to be exalted by the mere power of reason "to things above." Earthly and visible objects engross our minds, to the total exclusion of invisible and heavenly. And in awful

demonstration of this, we find from experience, that there is as little practical love to God, manifested in the words and actions of the great majority of professing Christians, as in those of the unenlightened heathens, or untutored barbarians.

Of that philosophical or speculative love to the Almighty, which displays itself in admiration of His goodness, or contemplation of His infinite perfections, there may be found a good deal in the writings of modern divines, as well as of the ancient sages. But of that lively cordial affection toward Him which evidences its existence by fervent devotion to His service, and sincere (though imperfect) obedience to His revealed will, alas, my Beloved Brethren, if we may judge from the conduct and conversation of those around us, (*and the tree is known by its fruits,*) there exists but very little throughout the professing Christian world; and *that little* confined exclusively to the breasts of those "who are enabled by grace sincerely to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

For faith in the blessed Saviour "worketh by love," inasmuch as it furnishes us with an *adequate* cause for loving God. Taught, as the believer is, to regard himself as a fallen, sinful creature—an enemy to God by his wicked works, and justly obnoxious to His divine vengeance—his faith in the Gospel of Christ crucified enables him to look up to the Supreme Being as to a *reconciled Fa-*

*ther*—a “God of love,”—a “Merciful Creditor,” who, when he had nothing to pay, *frankly forgave him his entire debt.* Yes, my Christian Brethren, the stupendous manifestation of the love of God to our guilty souls, in sending His beloved Son to be a propitiation for our sins by His agonizing death upon the cross, and thus freely forgiving and reconciling us unto Himself, “even while we were yet enemies,” must and does produce love to Him in the breasts of all who sincerely believe it.

For this is no abstract or speculative notion, that merely sets our understandings at work: no, it is a visible act of grace on His part, whereby the greatest favour that can possibly be conceived is conferred upon us, namely, unmerited deliverance from eternal misery, and the gift of everlasting life and happiness. “The wages of our sins is *death*, but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord;” for “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!” With reason does the Apostle exclaim, “Herein was love! not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And precisely on the same principle that an act of great and undeserved kindness excites, in our natural minds, sensations of love and gratitude to our benefactor—so also the sincere belief of this mani-

festation of God's mercy and good will to our souls, excites in our hearts reciprocal feelings of love and gratitude towards Him.

The only difference is, that "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which worketh by love," is not a *natural*, but a super-natural principle. Human reason, of itself, is unable to apprehend or believe the great mysteries of redemption, as revealed in the Gospel of Christ crucified; "*The natural man,*" saith the Apostle, "*receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*"

If reason was of itself sufficient to enable men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who should have been such sincere converts to the faith of His Gospel as the *Jews*, who heard His sublime discourses, and beheld His astonishing miracles? But no, universal experience testifies, that unassisted reason, however powerfully exercised respecting the mysterious doctrines of the cross, is as unable to overcome our natural prejudices against divine truth, and to produce faith in those doctrines, as the sublimest theological speculations are unable to warm our natural affections so as to produce the love of God in our hearts.

The doctrine of "Christ crucified" for the sins of His people, ever has been, and ever will be, a stumbling-block to the natural pride, and foolish-

ness to the natural reason both of Jew and Gentile. It requires the enlightening and renewing operation of the same Spirit which revealed this blessed truth, to enable us to receive it into our hearts with faith. We must, through a conviction of our own sinfulness and misery, be brought to see *our need of the Saviour*, before we can value Him. And we must, through sincere faith in His Gospel, be enabled to experience His *all-sufficiency to save us*, before we can love Him. And since it is the regenerating operation of God the Holy Ghost alone, which can produce in us such a *conviction of sin as will lead us to the Saviour*, and *such an apprehension of His all-sufficiency as will cause us to love Him*, it follows that the individual who experiences this faith working by love to "*God in Christ*," must consequently be regarded as a *new creature*, "*born again of the Spirit*." As it is written, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*." "*Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new*."

Do any of us, my Beloved Brethren, experience this faith in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ working in our hearts by love to God our Saviour? If our consciences testify that we do experience this divine affection in any degree, let us give God the glory, for it is the effect of His redeeming love to our guilty souls. It is His grace alone which causes us thus to differ, both from others

and from our former selves, for surely we can well remember a time when our hearts were strangers to the love of God. Let us then ever keep in mind that it is "By grace we are saved *through faith*, and this not of ourselves; it is the *gift* of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

This, my Brethren, is the only *operative* principle of obedience to God's commandments. The love of sin is so deep rooted in our fallen natures, that nothing else can overcome it. Other motives and causes, indeed, such as habit, self-interest, and a proud sense of duty, may so far operate upon us, as to produce outward *morality* and reformation of life. But the heart and affections still remain unsanctified. This is a mere *cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter, while the inside continues filled with uncleanness and impurity*. We are still "*lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God*;" and our hearts remain in contented subjection to sinful lusts and passions. But faith in our Lord Jesus Christ furnishes us at once with the motive and the power to overcome our naturally evil propensities. When the Holy Spirit has produced that great change in our minds which enables us to believe in the blessed Jesus as our Saviour, we then "pass from darkness to



light, and from the power of Satan unto God." The love of sin, which once reigned in our breasts without a rival, is thenceforth not indeed altogether eradicated, but effectually counteracted and superseded by the love of our reconciled God. Exactly in proportion to the magnitude of those sins which we believe to be freely forgiven, do we now earnestly desire to manifest our *abhorrence* of sin, and our love to His laws; for "*which of us will love Him most? surely He to whom most has been forgiven.*"

If we therefore, my Brethren, really believe that our sins have been freely forgiven for the sake of the merits and sufferings of the adorable Son of God, we shall most assuredly feel (with the Apostle) the "*love of this precious Saviour constraining us*" to renounce our darling sins, and to walk henceforth in the way of obedience to His commandments. For this, be it remembered, is the only sure evidence of our love to God in Christ. "If ye *love me*," He says, "*keep My commandments.* He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." "If any man," says St. John, "*say I love God, and keepeth not His commandments he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*"

Now this leads us to the second consideration suggested by our text, namely, with respect to the *motives* which induce those who love the Lord, to

*"hate the thing that is evil."* And here the words of the Psalmist deserve our admiration, *First*, on account of the opposition implied in them. "Oh ye that *love* the Lord," he says, "*see that ye hate the thing that is evil.*"—Thereby signifying that the *hatred of sin* is the sure indication and consequence of our *love to God*; and, *Secondly*, on account of the strength of the expression—For we may observe, he does not merely exhort those who love the Lord to *cease from evil, or to avoid committing it*, but actually to *hate it*! As the Apostle also says to the Roman Christians, (xliith chap. 9th verse) "*Abhor that which is evil.*" Feel a perfect loathing and detestation for it, as for an abominable and accursed thing; the very idea of which should excite the strongest sensations of disgust and abhorrence in your souls! Would to God, my brethren, that it always did so! Would that we could at all times say, from our hearts, "*I abhor every thing evil,*" in every degree and shape that I meet with it. This is indeed the grand desideratum, the "one thing needful," with every real Christian. The highest happiness, the most exalted perfection, of which the regenerate soul can form any notion in this world, is to be able cordially and uniformly to loath and detest sin, in whatever form it may present itself. It is for this he prays, it is for this he strives, it is for

finite holiness demanded that "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction should be made to Him for the evil of our doings." And for this reason, as the most striking manifestation that could be given how *exceedingly* odious our iniquities were in His sight; He delivered up His own Son, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person to take upon Him the form of a sinner, to endure the utmost disgrace and agony that it is possible to conceive; and, finally, to die the death of a common malefactor, between two thieves; in order that by so doing He might vindicate His own holiness, and prove Himself to be, "*just, while He justified the ungodly.*"

Thus, by a wonderful combination of wisdom and grace, the very act which above all things manifests His exceeding love to our souls, and His willingness to forgive our transgressions, displays at the same time, in the most striking colours, His utter *abhorrence* of evil. He was willing, we find, to be reconciled to us as sinners, but He could never be reconciled *to our sins*. Nothing but the blood of His beloved Son, offered up as an atoning sacrifice, could suffice to wash their guilt away. Therefore, my Brethren, if we wish for an irresistible motive to "hate the thing that is evil," let us turn our eyes to Mount Calvary, let us look at the adorable Son of God, whom our sins have pierced, hanging as an accursed thing upon the

tree of death, in the midst of the scoffs and revilings of his blood-thirsty murderers; and when with the eye of faith we behold "His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion"—When we see his immaculate body covered with stripes, wounds, and gore, suspended between heaven and earth as a spectacle to men and angels—His tender limbs mangled with the cruel nails—His venerable head lacerated with thorns, bowing beneath the weight of His mortal agony—When we hear that doleful exclamation in which He gave vent to the inconceivable anguish of His feelings, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And when we call to mind that the cause of this Divine *Being's* enduring all this wonderful disgrace and suffering was *sin*—that it was our rebellion against God which made it necessary for His glory that His beloved Son thus should suffer as our propitiatory sacrifice, *that He was wounded for our transgressions; that He was bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed!*—say, does *this* furnish us with no motive why we should "*hate the thing that is evil?*" Does this supply us with no reason why we should turn with abhorrence from those iniquities which nailed the Lord of Glory to the tree of torture? Oh, surely it does! As often as we look with the eye of faith on the adorable Son of God hanging

upon the cross, as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, we may, as it were, hear His own blessed voice exclaiming to us out of the midst of His agonies, Oh ye that love me, see that ye hate the thing that is evil !

Again, the glory of God our Saviour requires from us, that if we love Him we should hate that which is evil. Because thus only can we make it manifest that we are among the numbers of His friends, and not in the ranks of His enemies. Every thing that is evil proceeds directly from the Devil, who is emphatically denominated the *Roil* one, and whose great pleasure consists in tempting us to commit sin. On the contrary, every thing that is good comes immediately from God, who is the supreme source of goodness, and tends to His glorification. For "*Herein is My Father glorified, saith the blessed Jesus, that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.*" It was to this end that He uttered all those sublime discourses in which He so forcibly inculcates the love of goodness and the hatred of sin. It was to this end that He set us such an illustrious example of perfect obedience, that we should walk in His steps; keeping Himself "*Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.*" In whom even His blood-thirsty enemies were constrained to confess, that there was "*no sin, neither guile, found in His mouth.*" And it was to this end that He laid down His life for us, in order, namely,

that He might "Redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

If, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, we sincerely desire to glorify our gracious God in Christ, who has thus "bought us unto Himself with His own precious blood"—If we wish to obey His precepts—to copy His example—to fulfil the great end for which He agonized and died—to disclaim all connexion with His enemies—and to prove that we are indeed amongst the number of that "*Holy, that peculiar people, called to be saints*, whom He has washed, justified, and sanctified from their sins"—let us "hate that which is evil."

Once more, The very name of evil furnishes us with a most cogent reason for hating it. It implies something *hurtful* or *injurious*, and so it manifestly is, both in its nature and tendencies. All sin is hurtful in its nature, because it is direct rebellion against the holy laws of God; and surely every thing that offends or dishonours the Almighty King of heaven and earth, who is Himself essential goodness, must be, in its very nature, *hurtful* to the individual that commits it.

But besides this, see what immense, what incalculable evils the commission of sin has produced in the world around us! See how it has tarnished and despoiled the fair face of God's creation! What is it but sin, that has introduced death with

all its attendant pains and horrors into this fallen world? "By one man," St. Paul informs us, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, forasmuch as all have sinned." Thus we see that natural evil is declared in Scripture to be the necessary consequence of moral evil; and every day furnishes us with melancholy proofs that it is so. For oh, what complicated, what inconceivable miseries do we daily witness, arising from the indulgence of the evil passions of our corrupt nature!

See how the indulgence of hatred and revenge arms man against his fellow man, fills the earth with blood and slaughter, and makes it resound night and day with the cries of the helpless widow and orphan! See how the indulgence of licentious lust destroys the peace of whole families, fills our streets with wretched prostitutes, the prey of vice, famine, and loathsome disease, and brings down the grey hairs of their aged parents with shame and sorrow to the grave! Behold how the sin of drunkenness brings poverty and ruin upon its wretched victims, and those who are so unhappy as to be dependant on them for support! See how fraud and dishonesty are sure in the end to draw down infamy and destruction upon all who practice it! Contemplate! the evils with which covetousness, or the love of money has filled the world! The rapine, the extortion, the falsehood,

the cruelty, the treachery, of which it has been the fruitful source, thus verifying the words of the Apostle, that "the love of money is (in a sense) the root of all evil." And lastly, reflect upon the *eternal misery* which unrepented sin is sure to draw down upon the individual *in the world to come!* *The indignation and wrath, the tribulation and anguish, which the word of God positively denounces against every soul of man that doeth evil, on that awful day when He will recompense every man according to his works, and will say to the wicked, "depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!"*

Do we require any stronger reasons, my Brethren, to excite us to hate that which is evil? Let us do it *for our own sake*, out of regard to our own peace and comfort. Consider what unspeakable misery sin has been the cause of to ourselves individually, the pain,—the terror, the shame, the anguish, the remorse, which it has produced in our minds! Must we not confess that the evil consequences which we have experienced from sin, have far counterbalanced any pleasure arising from the commission of it? Is it not still, as far as it exists in us, a "worm in the gourd," eating into the very root of our comfort and our confidence; and causing us to tremble lest we should in the end fall short of the promised salvation?



Oh, then, my Dear Brethren, I do beseech you; for every reason, to obey the admonition of the Psalmist in our text, and "*Hate the thing that is evil.*" Hate it as your deadliest enemy, in whatsoever form or degree it presents itself to you! Hate evil thoughts, for the "*very thought of wickedness is sin*" in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. Hate evil words, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Hate evil actions, because every evil deed you commit pleases the Devil, dishonours God, and is a step taken on the road to destruction. Hate evil company because it tempts you to "*follow the multitude in doing evil.*"

For the sake of your own happiness and peace of mind—For the sake of your Christian profession, that you may not give the enemy reason to rejoice—As you value your immortal souls—As you hope for a happy death-bed, and a joyful resurrection—As a proof of your love to that adorable Saviour who died for you, and washed you in His blood—and to the eternal glory and praise of your covenant God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "*see that ye hate the thing that is evil.*"

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON XI.

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ON THE AUTHENTICITY, INSPIRATION, AND EXCELLENCY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.*

THE question which Pilate put to our blessed Lord "*What is Truth?*" is one that is deeply interesting to every reflective mind. For besides that there is an innate and ardent desire for knowledge in the human breast, the very circumstances in which the Creator has been pleased to place us, combine to make the acquisition of truth most fervently to be wished for by His rational creatures.

Living as we do in a world where every thing around us is transitory and uncertain—surrounded by objects with whose outward forms we have an imperfect acquaintance, but of whose essential na-

tures and properties we are and must be ignorant—brought up as we have been from infancy in the midst of *mysteries*—daily accustomed to witness the occurrence of events, the means and purposes of which are wholly unaccountable to us, so that we can scarcely assign a satisfactory reason for any thing we see, either in the natural or moral world, and are sometimes almost tempted to question the reality of all around us, yea, even of our own existence—it is no wonder, I say, that in this state of doubt and ignorance, our minds should turn with eagerness to every thing that bears the semblance of *truth*, and that a feeling of delight should associate itself with whatsoever seems to deserve the character of *certainity*.

Hence it is, that of all human sciences, the study of mathematics and experimental philosophy affords the greatest pleasure to those who have capacities for it, because by them we are enabled to arrive nearer the reality of things than by any other; and on the very same principle it is, that the study of the Sacred Scriptures affords such unspeakable comfort to the renewed mind. For these present us, my Christian Brethren, with truth itself in its purest and sublimest form. Those blessed books which are distinguished from all other writings by the honourable appellation of THE SCRIPTURES, (to use the words of that great philosopher, Mr. Locke), “have God for their Author,

salvation for their end, and *truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter.*" Truth, without any mixture of error! It is a pleasant thing to reflect, that this was the opinion of such men as Locke, Newton, Bacon, and Johnson. It is satisfactory to know, that the wisest and best of the human race have not been ashamed to submit their gigantic understandings to the teaching of *the Bible*. But it is still more comfortable to have the assurance from the lips of an Apostle, that "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.*"\*

These words, my Beloved Brethren, lead us to consider, in the first place, the *proofs* of the Divine Inspiration of the Old and New Testaments; and, secondly, the *consequences* which necessarily ensue from it.

First, I say, the words of St. Paul, in our text, lead us to consider what proofs there are of the Divine Inspiration of the Old and New Testament. For though *the Scripture*, to which the Apostle here adverts, includes only the writings of Moses and the Prophets (the *New Testament* not being

\* The author thinks it unnecessary to notice the different rendering which some give to this passage, viz. "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable," &c., because this is a manifest perversion of the original Greek, as every unprejudiced person who consults it will at once perceive.

then in existence), yet, as that title has since been applied to both Testaments alike, I shall therefore take the liberty, in the following discourse, of using the term Scripture in the common acceptation, namely, as designating all the canonical or generally received books in our English Bible.

And here the question naturally suggests itself; — *How can we be sure that the Scriptures contained in our Bibles are the very same with those which were regarded as being given by Divine Inspiration in the first ages of the Church?* To this question, which many have made a pretext for their infidelity, a most satisfactory answer can be returned.

For, first, with respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament as we now possess them, *the Jews*, who are the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, *do themselves acknowledge their authenticity.* They deny, indeed, the propriety of their application to Jesus Christ, but they do not pretend to deny that they are the genuine writings of the persons whose names they bear. Take, for instance, that remarkable prophecy contained in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, “ He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one after his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the

iniquity of us all." Or that equally remarkable prophecy in the 22d Psalm, "They pierced My hands and My feet, I may tell all My bones, they stand gaping and staring upon Me. They gave Me gall for meat, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink. They part My garments amongst them, and cast lots for My vesture." What a glorious triumph would it be for Jews and Infidels were it possible for them, with the least appearance of truth, to assert of these and such like unequivocal predictions,—“They are all spurious—They are interpolations—*They are not to be found in the original Scripture!*” But no—they do not for a moment dispute (what history proves to be fact) that these, with all the other canonical writings of our Old Testament, had been collected into a volume, and acknowledged by the Jewish nation to be of Divine original, for many centuries antecedent to the birth of our blessed Saviour; though, at the same time, with a marvellous infatuation and hardness of heart, they shut their eyes to their real meaning, and deny that they are applicable to Christ crucified, in whom *we know* they were literally fulfilled.

Seeing then, my Beloved Brethren, that the enemies of our holy religion were themselves *our librarians*—seeing that the Jews, the most determined foes to Christianity, have been themselves, in all ages, the guardians of those very books, by

which we prove that Jesus was the Christ, we can entertain no doubt with respect to their genuineness in all material points; for that some *trifling* errors and discrepancies have crept in through the mistakes of transcribers, neither Jews nor Christians pretend to deny. As for the books called Apocryphal, or of doubtful authority, they are given up by all, except that mother of abominations, the Church of Rome.

The same reasoning holds good also with respect to the Scriptures of the New Testament, as we now possess them. There cannot be the least doubt that those books which we are accustomed to receive as the histories of our Lord's life and sufferings, and the writings of His Apostles, were indeed *composed*, though not all actually *written* by those persons whose names they bear. For exclusive of the internal evidence of their authenticity, which is abundantly sufficient to satisfy every attentive and unprejudiced reader, we learn from ecclesiastical history, that they were collected into one volume, in much the same form that we now possess them, and publicly read in the assemblies of the faithful, a very few years after the death of the Apostles. And, although, owing to the corruption of human nature, the Church of Christ was very early divided into a number of sects and parties, each quoting the writings of the Apostles in support of their own opinions, and refutation of those

of others, yet it is a remarkable fact, *that we scarcely ever find them accusing each other of perverting the language of Scripture, or making false quotations.* One or two sects, indeed, we know, forged a Gospel and Epistle of their own, and attempted to impose it on the world as a production of the Apostles; but the forgery was quickly detected by their opponents, and the books themselves consigned to contempt and oblivion. This consideration alone is a convincing proof of the genuineness, *in all material points,* of the Scriptures of the New Testament as we now possess them.

Having thus answered the question with respect to the *authenticity* of the Scriptures, we now pass to the question of their *Divine original*. What reason, it may be enquired, have we for believing the truth of St. Paul's assertion, (in its broadest sense,) that *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God?* i. e. That the Holy Spirit of God, so inspired, directed, and controlled the writers of it, that while He left them at liberty to *use their own language,* and to *express their own feelings,* He at the same time constrained them to set down *every thing that was necessary for us to know,* and prevented them from recording any thing which was *not strictly true and profitable for us to be acquainted with.*

Now the first proof which I shall mention of



this Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures of our Old and New Testaments, is—the *miracles* which their writers were enabled by God to perform. With respect to the objections which infidels have urged against the evidence of miracles, they are really so trifling, so puerile, that we cannot help wondering how they could ever have found admission into a reflective mind. For the question respecting miracles is briefly resolvable into this.—

Does a miracle signify a wonderful work, the means of which surpasses human comprehension? If so, every thing we see around us, and experience within us, deserves the name. The creation of the world—the vegetation of seeds and plants—the revolution of the heavenly bodies—our own formation in the womb, and continued subsistence by means of breath, food, the circulation of the blood, &c. &c.—all these, I say, are *to us* miraculous; for “their knowledge is too excellent and wonderful for us, we cannot attain unto it.” We need not, in this case, object to the evidence of miracles because they are of daily occurrence.

Again, Does a miracle signify something supernatural, or contrary to the ordinary course of nature? If so, I would ask, *Is not the God of nature able to alter or suspend His own laws?* Is not He who created the sun, able to stop its apparent course in the firmament? Is not He “who measurcth the waters in the hollow of His hand,” able

to divide the sea; and make it a way for His ransomed to pass over? Is not He who breathed the breath of life into a senseless clod, able to raise the dead to life—He who made the eye, to give sight to the blind—He who formed the ear, to make the deaf hear—He who created the tongue, to make the dumb speak? And if the Almighty God is able to do these things (which I suppose none will dispute), what reason have we to doubt the fact that He has done so, more than to doubt the truth of any other *well-authenticated historical narrative*?

That God would be pleased to make a revelation of His Divine will to His rational creatures, has been admitted, even by Heathen philosophers, to be a probable and reasonable supposition. And is it not equally probable and consistent with reason, that He would accompany this revelation by such wonderful works as should convince His rational creatures that it did indeed proceed from Him?

If, then, the miracles recorded in the Sacred Scriptures to have been performed by God, at the word or prayer of His inspired servants, are neither *impossible, improbable, nor unreasonable*, does it not appear childish and futile in the extreme to object against them, that they are *too wonderful* to be credited? We might, with equal good sense, refuse to believe that the world had a Creator, because we cannot comprehend how it

could have been formed out of nothing; and yet we must either admit the truth of this, or believe it to be *self-created* and *self-existent*, which is too absurd to need refutation.

But the *manner* in which the miracles of Scripture are related to have been performed, is itself the strongest proof of their reality. For these wonderful works, we learn, "were not done (like Mohammed's miracle) *in a corner*, or in the dark," but publicly, in the light of the sun, and before the face of thousands. We find Moses and his successors repeatedly appealing to the Jews, as being themselves *eye-witnesses* of the wonderful works that were wrought for them, in such language as this, "*Your eyes have seen what great things the Lord hath done for you*"—"Ye yourselves do know that not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath promised to do for you, &c." In like manner, the blessed Jesus makes continual appeals to his enemies for the truth of the wonderful works which He performed in His Father's name. "I have greater witness," He says to them, "than that of John. The works that My Father gave Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness that the Father hath sent Me." And, again, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe Me for My works' sake"—"If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they

had not had sin," &c. Accordingly we find that even the Chief Priests and Scribes were constrained to acknowledge the reality of our Lord's miracles. "This man doeth many miracles: if we let Him thus alone, all men will believe in Him, and *the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.*" And, again, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." We are fully warranted therefore, my Brethren, in asserting, that the miracles recorded in Scripture are a convincing proof of their divine inspiration. For we are sure Almighty God would not have permitted such wonderful works to have been performed, *in His name*, in confirmation of an imposture.

Again, The *Prophecies* contained in Scripture are another standing demonstration of their divine original. I allude not at present to those prophecies, the fulfilment of which is recorded in the Bible as well as in profane history; such as the first captivities and dispersions of the Israelites—Their subsequent restoration and settlement in their own land—The advent of the Messiah—His sufferings, death, and resurrection, or the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. But I advert to those prophecies which are now actually fulfilling before our eyes, viz. The total dispersion of the Jews throughout all the nations of the earth—Their miraculous preservation as a distinct people

—The remarkable sterility of the once fertile land of Judea—The untameable character of the wandering Arabs, known to be the descendants of Ishmael—The existence of the family of Jonadab, the son of Rechab—The utter destruction of the once magnificent cities of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, &c.—The despicable condition of Egypt, and the gradual and astonishing diffusion of Christ's religion over the whole world. These extraordinary facts, I say, of which we ourselves are witnesses; and which every reader of his Bible knows were *literally* predicted nearly 3,000 years ago, exactly as they have since taken place, are convincing evidences that the Scriptures which foretel them were given by inspiration of God. For we are sure that nothing else could have enabled their writers to describe, with such minuteness, future and improbable events.

Further, the *sublime and authoritative language of Sacred Writ*, so totally different from that of all other books in the world, is another remarkable evidence of their divine original. Who can avoid being struck with reverence at the words in which Isaiah opens his prophecy, "HEAR, OH HEAVENS, AND GIVE EAR, OH EARTH, FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN." Or with those of Jeremiah, 22d chapter, 29th verse, "OH EARTH, EARTH, EARTH, HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD." Or, again, with those of Amos, 3d chapter, 29th

verse, "*The Lion hath roared, who will not fear—The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy.*" Similar majestic declarations of "God's Word" are to be found in almost every page of the prophetic writings, all beautifully harmonizing with one another, and though totally different in point of style and matter, obviously the productions of men who were themselves conscious of being commissioned by God to make known His will, which consciousness gave this supernatural and commanding energy to their language.

In like manner we are informed that the Jewish multitude were "*astonished at the doctrine of the blessed Jesus, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" The intimate knowledge of the human heart which is displayed in His parables (take that of the sower, for instance); the dignity and purity of His discourses, and the promptitude and extraordinary force of His replies to the ensnaring questions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, constrained even the officers that were sent to apprehend Him to confess, "*Never man spake like this man;*" which is accounted for by our Lord's own declaration, "*The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father which dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.*"

Now, when with all this we call to mind who the persons were by whom the several books of

the Old and New Testament were composed, namely, (with few exceptions) *poor, uneducated shepherds, carpenters, fishermen, and tent-makers*, who were themselves so convinced of the truth of those things which they recorded, as willingly to endure poverty, contempt, persecution, and the most cruel sufferings even unto death, rather than conceal them, we cannot entertain a doubt, that it was nothing else than the Holy Spirit which enabled them to speak and act as they did. As for the Apocryphal books, their very style is an evidence of their being human compositions, which indeed the author of the 2d Book of Maccabees candidly acknowledges in 15th chapter, 38th verse, "If I have done well," he says, "and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto." A plain confession that he had done his best, and could do no more. How different this language from the "THUS SAITH THE LORD" of the really inspired prophets!

But the most satisfactory evidence that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; is the *matter* which it contains, and the *effect* which every part of it combines to produce in the minds of those who read and believe it. This leads us to the second consideration suggested by our text; namely, the declaration that all Scripture is "Profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

and for instruction in righteousness." Let us briefly attend to this fourfold profit resulting from it.

First, All Scripture is "*profitable for doctrine.*" It teaches us those mysterious and momentous truths respecting the nature and character of God, and of our only way of obtaining His divine favour, which we could not have learnt by any other means than that of a revelation. "For who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts."

With respect to the nature of Almighty God, Scripture informs us that "*He is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.*" That He is *Infinite*—"Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him." That He is *Eternal*—"The High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity"—"The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." That He is *self-existent*—"The I am" and "none else beside Him." And, once more, that He exists in the *Three Persons* of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," who though *One* in substance, will, and glory, are yet *separate and distinct* in their modes of existing and acting. All these doctrines, be it observed, respecting the Infinite, Eternal, Spiritual, Self-existent, and Triune na-



ture of the Lord Jehovah, are *equally mysterious and incomprehensible* to us, but being equally revealed in Scripture, are therefore all alike objects of *faith* with those who believe it. They are profitable to humble the pride of our reason. They shew us how little we can understand of the Divine Perfections. And their very incomprehensibility is, to the thinking mind, an evidence of their divine original; for what mortal could have conceived or invented them! Besides, that spiritual things should be incomprehensible to flesh and blood, might reasonably have been anticipated.

Again, with respect to the *character* of God. All Scripture teaches us that He is *All Mighty*. "*Is any thing too hard for Him*" who created heaven and earth? That He is *All Holy*—"Of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." That He is *All Merciful*—"Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But that He is, at the same time, *All Just*—"By no means clearing the guilty." This account which Scripture gives of the character of God, answers to the sublimest idea which our minds can form of the Divine perfections.

Further, with respect to *our own nature*, we learn from Scripture that we consist of two parts; body and spirit; and that while our bodies shall return to the dust from which they were taken, our spirits shall return to God who gave them, to

be rewarded or punished by Him “according to the deeds done in the flesh,” the *probability* of which is deducible from reason itself.

Once more, with respect to *our relation* to God, Scripture every where informs us that we are not only His creatures, “as clay in the hands of the potter,” entirely dependant for every thing upon His sovereign will, but also His subjects, accountable to Him for all our thoughts, words, and actions. He has given us laws for the regulation of our conduct, which cannot be broken without bringing upon us certain and terrible vengeance in the world to come. “*It is appointed, we are told, unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment.*” “The wicked,” saith David, “shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.” And, with respect to our only way of obtaining His divine favour, it further informs us, that it is *through a Mediator*—“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” saith our Lord, “no man cometh to the Father but by Me.” Thus it is that “All Scripture is profitable unto us for Doctrine.”

But, Secondly, “All Scripture is also *profitable for Reproof*,” or, for convincing those who believe it, of their sinful and perishing state by nature. It every where teaches us, my Beloved Brethren, that man is naturally a fallen creature, an apostate

from God, a rebel against His laws; and, consequently, obnoxious to the curse which they pronounce against all who violate them. For it is written, "*Cursed is the man that continueth not in all things written in the Book of the Law to do them.*" It teaches us that, "By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, because all have (in Adam) sinned." Thus it satisfactorily accounts for what would otherwise be inexplicable to us, the existence of natural and moral evil throughout the world. It teaches us, "that the imaginations of man's heart are only evil from his youth"—That "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." This melancholy description which the Bible gives of the moral depravity of the human character, so exactly coincides with what universal experience proves to be fact, that it is, in the believer's eyes, a convincing proof of its divine original.

Scripture further informs us, my Brethren, that the laws which God hath given us for the regulation of our conduct are (as might be expected) *like Himself; holy, spiritual, and perfect*, extending their jurisdiction not merely to *our outward actions*, but also to the secret thoughts and desires

of our hearts. For the same law which saith, "Thou shalt not steal," saith also, "Thou shalt not covet" or desire any thing that is unlawful. And, by applying this spiritual and perfect law of holiness to our hearts, Scripture finds us guilty of all manner of evil desires and unholy imaginations—as our blessed Lord declares to His disciples, "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed *evil thoughts*, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, *these*," he adds, "*are they which defile the man.*"

Thus it is, my Beloved Brethren, that all Scripture is profitable for our reproof or conviction of sin. "It lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sweeps away the refuge" of hypocrisy and self-righteousness. It places the standard of divine holiness at our hearts, and shews us how miserably the best of us fall short of that *perfect love to God and man* which it requires. It teaches us that "all men in the world have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and, therefore, are alike guilty and condemned before Him. It convicts us of innumerable offences in thought, word, and deed. It makes us feel that our hearts are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It, as it were, holds up a mirror before our mind's eye, and shews us that we are altogether unclean and abominable in the sight

of a God of purity, that our best righteousness is as "filthy rags;" and that nothing which we can do of ourselves, can render us righteous or acceptable before *Him* "who looketh not to the outward actions, but to the heart." For, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "What man can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" In this respect we find that the "Word of God is indeed quick and powerful: sharper than a two edged sword, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts," bringing conviction and self-condemnation to all who believe it. And this is another satisfactory proof of its divine original.

Thirdly, All Scripture is, moreover, *profitable for correction*. The word "correction" literally signifies setting right those who were wrong, or, making straight that which was crooked; and every sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, will at once perceive in what respect the Sacred Scripture is profitable for this. It every where corrects or sets right those who believe it, by pointing to "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," as the only Saviour of lost sinners; as He Himself says to the Jews, "*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me.*"

The Scriptures of *Moses in the Law* testify of Christ, by the types and figures of animals offered

in sacrifice. For "these (we are told) were the shadows of good things to come, but the substance was Christ." They taught the solemn truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins;" but it is not the blood of bulls and of goats that can ever take away sin, but the blood of Christ, the "Eternal Lamb of God, once offered, to take away the sins of the world."

The Scriptures of *the Prophets* also testify of Christ as, the "Immanuel, or God with us"—The "Prince of Peace"—The "Lord our Righteousness"—The "Branch of the stem of Jesse"—The "Shepherd who should come to seek His lost sheep"—The "Anointed Deliverer and King of His chosen people," of "*whose kingdom there should be no end.*"

And the Scriptures of the *New Testament*, every where testify of Christ, as "crucified for our offences, and risen again for our justification." They set him forth as "our Propitiation"—Our "Ransom"—our "All Sufficient Sacrifice," who hath "made our peace by the blood of His cross"—"our Great High Priest,"—"our Advocate with the Father"—our "God manifested in the flesh, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us." They repeatedly assure us, that "by faith in Him we are freely justified and accepted with God, without any works or deservings of our own." That in Him

"God can be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly." That "His blood cleanseth us from all sin." That "by His obedience, all that believe in Him are made righteous." That "His grace is sufficient for us, and His strength made perfect in our weakness." And, in a word, That "*Whoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

This it is, my Christian Brethren, that all Scripture is indeed profitable unto us for *correction*, or for setting us in the right way of acceptance with God. It first wounds, and then heals. It first teaches us our guilty and perishing state by nature, and then makes known to us the blessed truth that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," for that "we are justified *freely* by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, All Scripture is profitable unto us, my Brethren, for "*Instruction in Righteousness.*" It not only instructs us in what way we may become righteous, but it also every where tends to make those who believe it righteous, through the sanctifying effect which it produces in their minds and hearts.

All Scripture we find abounds with the promises of God to impart His Holy Spirit to His faithful people; "I will put My laws," he says, "into their minds and write them upon their hearts. . . And I

will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And I will put My fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." It informs us, moreover, that "God hath chosen His people unto Himself, through faith and the sanctification of His Spirit, unto obedience." It says to us, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find." And assures us that the consequence of receiving the Holy Spirit, is that we are thereby made "*new creatures*," "*renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness*."

Thus it is that all Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness to those who believe it, forasmuch as it instructs them in what way they may become righteous, and holy, and happy, both in this world and that which is to come. This is another remarkable evidence of its divine original. Here we have upwards of sixty books, most of which we know were written by different persons, of different countries, habits, ranks, tempers, tastes, and ages, treating of different subjects, and written at the interval of many hundreds of years from one another, but all having *the same holy tendency*; all wonderfully and beautifully combining, both by *precept* and *example*, to produce *the fear of God*, and *obedience to His commandments* in the minds of those who read and believe them.

Yes, my Beloved Brethren, the grand object of



Scripture every where is, to make us hate sin and love goodness—To make us dread the wrath of God and desire His favour—To shew us the evil and misery of disobedience to His laws, and the unspeakable blessedness of a holy and godly life. To this end it warns the sinner, checks the presumptuous, instructs the ignorant, encourages the penitent, strengthens the feeble, and comforts the wretched. And can we doubt that this Blessed Book, containing every thing that is “profitable” for us, both in time and eternity, was indeed given by inspiration of God? Can we for a moment suppose, that a book having so *holy* and *profitable* a tendency, was the production of impostors? Of ignorant and wicked men, who wished to impose their own lies upon the world as a Revelation from God? Surely not. Every page of the Sacred Volume bears the impress, too legibly to be mistaken, of infinite wisdom, infinite holiness, and infinite beneficence. It is for this reason that the blessed Jesus, in His last prayer for His believing people, says to His Heavenly Father, “Sanctify them with Thy truth. **THY WORD IS TRUTH.**”

Seeing, then, my Dear Brethren, that the Scriptures of God’s Word are thus “able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus”—Seeing that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is *more or less* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and

for instruction in righteousness"—how ought we to bless and adore His Holy Name for having given to us this most profitable word of life, and peace, and consolation! How ought we to prize our Bibles as an inestimable treasure, to value them (like David) far more than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and to make them, as He did, "our meditation day and night!" What reason have we to rejoice in the reflection that whatever else may be false, the Bible is *true*—Whatever else may be doubtful, the Word of God is *infallible*—Whatever else may deceive or mislead us, all Scripture is given by inspiration of Him *who cannot lie*, to warn us, to instruct us, to reprove us, to correct us, to sanctify us, to comfort us, to strengthen us, to support us, to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths during our pilgrimage through this world of sin, sorrow, and uncertainty? Is there any other book in the world that can, in any of these respects, bear the least comparison with the Bible? Not one. Shall we then permit its difficulties, or its mysteries, to make us doubt its divine original? Surely not. No more than the difficulties and mysteries which we daily meet with in the natural world, can make us doubt the existence of a Creator and His Providential government. If there are difficulties in the *works* of God, the same may also be expected in His *Word*. Let us then earnestly pray to Him

of His infinite mercy to impart to us His blessed "Spirit of Truth"—to "*open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures.*" And, let us imitate the conduct of the "*noble Bereans,*" in *searching the Scriptures daily* for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON XII.

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AN OLD AGE OF MISERY, CONTRASTED WITH AN  
OLD AGE OF BLESSEDNESS.

2 SAMUEL XIX. 32. and following verses.

*Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old, and he had provided the King of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim. For he was a very great man. And the King said unto Barzillai, come thou over with me and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the King, How long have I to live that I should go up with the King unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern betwixt good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the King?*

THE story of Barzillai the Gileadite is briefly this. When David was obliged to fly from Jerusalem, on account of the unnatural rebellion raised against

him by his son Absalom, he and his followers were greatly distressed from want of provisions, not having had time to prepare a sufficient quantity before they left the city. In this necessity Barzillai the Gileadite, a very loyal and wealthy man, who dwelt at Rogelim, came down to meet his afflicted sovereign, at a place called Mahanaim, bringing with him a great quantity of food of all kinds, for the use of the king and his companions in adversity. This kind action gratified David so much, that when the rebellion was terminated by the death of Absalom, and the destruction of his army, he (on his return to Jerusalem) gave that invitation to Barzillai, which we read in the text, to accompany him to the city, and live with him in the palace, and that he (the king) would provide bountifully for his support and comfort during the remainder of his days. To which the old man prudently replied, in the language of the text, that having now arrived at a very advanced age, and having consequently lost all relish and capacity for this world's enjoyments, he should only be a burden to his royal master, and therefore prayed to be excused from accepting the invitation, and to be permitted to transfer it to his son Chimham, who would gladly wait upon the king in his stead.

“How long have I to live, (said he,) that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern betwixt

good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?"

Now these words, my Beloved Brethren, naturally lead our thoughts to that latest period of mortal existence, which has well been called man's "second childhood." At which season, in the beautiful language of Solomon, "The keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened; and the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of the grinding is low; and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low," &c. It is a subject peculiarly calculated to excite the gravest reflections in our minds. For if we do not ourselves attain unto this extreme limit of human life, when the "strength of man is but labour and sorrow," the reason will be, because, ere that time, death shall have sealed our eternal doom.

May the Lord, of His infinite mercy, "so teach us all to number our few days upon earth, that we may, while we have time, apply our hearts unto heavenly wisdom." May He sanctify our meditations to the edification of our souls, that so, whether the silver cord of our lives be lengthened out to its full measure of threescore years and ten, or

whether it be broken in the midst, we may at all times be prepared for that awful change which must, sooner or later, come upon every one of us. And since we learn from experience that the few who are permitted to arrive at old age, either lose all relish for the pleasures of the world, or if they do not lose their relish for them, generally lose *all power of enjoying* them; let us wisely renounce these pleasures before necessity compels us to give them up, and earnestly seek for those more substantial and enduring enjoyments of which neither age nor death can deprive us.

The words of our text suggest to us, my Brethren, in the *First* place, to consider the fact, that old age generally deprives those who arrive at it, if not of the *desire*, at least of the *power of enjoying* what are commonly called the *pleasures* of this world. And, *Secondly*, to enquire whether there be any pleasures, and what they are, which old people are capable of enjoying, and which can at all compensate them for the absence of worldly gratifications.

First, I say, the words of Barzillai in our text lead us to consider the *fact*, that old age usually deprives those who arrive at it, if not of the *desire*, at least of the *power of enjoying* what are commonly called the pleasures of life, such as the gratifications of the appetite and of the senses, music, dancing, feasting, fashionable amusements, &c. &c. This is a general law of nature, which seems to

admit but of few exceptions, and without doubt there are wise reasons why it should be so.

The season of life, commonly called old age, is really the commencement of that decay of our bodily constitutions which must ere long terminate in the cessation of our mortal existence. At that critical season every thing belonging to our persons begins to alter its appearance for the worse. The rosy colours of youth, health, and beauty, gradually yield their place to the dull cadaverous hue of death. The emaciated body becomes relaxed and feeble, a sort of "living hospital," full of pains and aches, and bending beneath its load of years towards that earth which is, as it were, opening its bosom to receive it to its native dust. The sinews grow stiff and rigid. The limbs, unable and unwilling to perform their office, remind us, by their slow uncertain motion, that the time is fast approaching when they shall move no more. The eyes wax dim and lose their lustre, shewing by their vacant gaze, the almost total exhaustion of those animal spirits which once lit them up with animation and intellect. And the ears, those precious inlets to the soul of so much profitable and interesting communication, are no longer open either to the sound of pleasure or instruction.

Thus every thing connected with the bodily frame has undergone a great and woeful alteration. The individual is become different, both in ap-



pearance and reality, from what he was a short time before, insomuch that those who have not seen him for a few years, can scarcely trace the least resemblance to his former self. The objects from which he once derived his chief gratification, have lost their power to please, and he is become entirely dependant for support upon those who formerly looked up to him for help and protection.

In this melancholy condition of the body, when all its powers of sense and motion are rapidly vanishing away, one after another, like the yellow leaves of autumn, it is natural for us to enquire into the state of *the mind*—How is it generally affected by the sad reverse which is taking place in its earthly tabernacle?

Alas! in the great majority of instances we find that the alteration which the individual's mind undergoes is even more deplorable than that of the body; for in proportion as old age advances upon him, he gradually exchanges cheerfulness for despondency, good humour for sullen discontent and peevishness, good nature for selfishness, frankness for suspicion, generosity for avarice, and, in a word, every amiable quality which he once possessed, for others that, if not directly opposite, are at least much less estimable than their predecessors. I do not say that this is *universally* the effect which old age produces upon the individual's mind, for

doubtless we occasionally meet with some remarkable exceptions, in which increase of years seems rather to soften the natural character, and render it even more amiable than it was before. But certainly experience proves that the *general tendency* of age is to produce those melancholy changes in the temper and disposition, which I have just been describing.

Nor is it difficult to assign a reason for this being the case. Cut off as the mind of an old person usually is, more or less, from all those *exterior* sources of gratification which it once possessed—deprived of all those powers of sensual enjoyment, which formerly constituted so great a part of its happiness—seeing those it loves dropping off one after another—tormented, moreover, as it frequently is, with excruciating pains which admit of no relief, and still more with the bitter reflection that its date of earthly existence is almost over, that its season for enjoying the pleasures of this world is nearly passed away, and that the fearful hour is rapidly approaching, when its few remaining comforts, derived from the society and attention of beloved relatives and friends, must be exchanged for an unknown and dreadful eternity—considering all this, I say, there are but too many obvious reasons why the mind of an old person should sympathize with the misery of the body, and give place to that excessive irritability

and discontent, which, where it exists (as it too frequently does) causes life to be indeed "*a burden*," both to the individual himself and those around him.

These, however, are only the immediate and obvious causes of old age, being for the most part a season of mental as well as bodily misery. The *primary* cause of all is, the *innate corruption of the human heart*, which is at all times the fruitful source of discontent and unhappiness to the unconverted, both young and old. "The carnal mind," which, as the Apostle says, "*is enmity against God*," which loves the things of this present world more than the favour of its Creator, which has its affections set upon things below, not on things above, and which has formed to itself no notion or desire of any happiness superior to that which is derived from the fleeting, perishing, things of time and sense; this "*carnal or unconverted mind*," I say, my Brethren, is that which operates, more or less, *at all seasons of life*, so as to make existence a curse, and to verify the words of Job, that "*man born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery*."

But, without doubt, the time when its operations are most apparent and dreadful, are in old age, when all *human* sources of happiness are out off—when all the broken cisterns of "*creature comforts*" from which the individual had been accustomed to

seek for enjoyment, are dried up—when the mind is completely thrown upon *its own resources*, and must (if it is not renewed and upheld by Divine Grace) taste the curse of human life in all its bitterness. And oh, my Beloved Brethren, surely no condition can be conceived more deplorable, more *hopelessly wretched*, than that of an old person, whether male or female, in this carnal state of mind, without any *inward sources of comfort*, either clinging with eager pertinacity to a world which he is just on the point of quitting for ever, and unwilling to relinquish his darling pleasures, even when the power of deriving gratification from them has almost ceased; or else, the victim of discontent and fretfulness, looking backward without satisfaction upon a life spent in vanity—and forward, without any well-grounded hope, to the dark and cheerless futurity that awaits him!

Verily, when we see, as, alas! we frequently do, the aged worldling, trembling on the very brink of eternity, yet still pursuing the pleasures of life as greedily as ever—when we behold the hoary votaries of folly squandering away those precious hours at the theatre or the card-table, which they should be devoting to the study of their Bibles, and making preparation to meet their God—the avaricious wretch, still in his old age, panting after gain, and with his lean and shrivelled fingers, counting over that glittering

dust which cannot purchase him one moment's reprieve from torment, and which he must so soon exchange for a coffin, a winding-sheet, and a bed of clay; or the grey-headed slave of sensuality and voluptuousness, still hungering and thirsting after his filthy gratifications, and burning with inward fires, while the snows of time are on his head, and the hand of death upon his heart; surely we must confess, that in such instances as these, old age does indeed present us with a hideous and disgusting spectacle! Surely, of all the forms in which the curse and misery of fallen man appear conspicuous, that of an old worldling, "whose bones are full of the sins of his youth," eagerly clinging to earth, while he is just tottering on the brink of hell, is the most appalling!

Having thus taken a full view of the *dark side* of the picture, let us now endeavour to discover if there be not a *bright side*. The second subject which our text suggests to us, is the consideration whether there be any enjoyments of which old persons are capable, and which can at all compensate them for the absence of worldly gratifications.

And here the words of Solomon forcibly occur to our recollections, "*The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*" "The hoary head," he says, "is a crown of glory."—This is a remarkable expression. In the view which we have just been taking of it, we

have seen the hoary head a crown of contempt and misery ; we are now called upon to contemplate it as a crown of honour and blessedness ; for to the *Christian*, to the man or the woman, who by sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, has been enabled through life to make God their trust, and to seek for His Redeeming Love as the "one thing needful" to their peace, the season of old age, if they are permitted to arrive at it, is, indeed, the season of peculiar honour and rejoicing. And as there is no point of view in which the curse of sin appears more terrible than in the instance of a grey-headed reprobate, so, likewise, there is no point of view in which grace appears more triumphant, or the blessings of redemption more lovely, than in the person of an aged believer, completely weaned from the world, whose evil passions and tempers have been brought under perfect control, and who is gradually drawing near to the close of his earthly pilgrimage, with the words of old Simeon in his mouth, "*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.*"

"How long have I to live?" asks Barzillai in the text. The Christian's reply to this question is, *I live for ever* ; for that blessed Saviour, whose I am, and in whom I trust, hath said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and be-

lieth in Me, shall never die." Confiding in these words of Him who died for him, and washed him in His blood, it is the aged Christian's privilege to be "*willing to live, yet not afraid to die.*" Old age, which, to the unconverted, is the gate of death and the threshold of hell, is, to the sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the threshold of heaven and the gate of everlasting life. It is, as it were, the Pisgah, or summit of his mortal existence, from which, like Moses of old, he may refresh himself with a near prospect of the promised land of rest and peace, the glories of which sometimes cause him to forget the Jordan he has to cross before he arrives at it.

"*I am now fourscore years old,*" said Barzillai to the king. The Christian at fourscore is like a goodly cedar, rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, and continually watered with His all-sufficient grace, whose topmost bough almost reaches to heaven. Of such choice plants in the house of the Lord, it is written in the 92d Psalm, verse 14, "*They shall bring forth fruit in old age;*" yea, though their bodies may wax feeble, yet their souls "*shall be fat and flourishing.*" In proportion as the "*outward man* perisheth, the *inward man* is renewed day by day;" and they may each adopt the Apostle's words, and say, "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight,*

I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also who love His appearing."

"*Can I discern betwixt good and evil?*" asks Barzillai. Yes, replies the aged believer, I thank my God and Saviour, that "*By reason of use, my (spiritual) senses are exercised to discern betwixt real good and evil;*" yea, moreover, I am enabled by His grace to "hate the evil, and choose the good." And while I cheerfully renounce what are falsely called the "good things of this world," in the enjoyment of which I never found true happiness, and of which I can testify, from my own experience, that they are at best but "vanity and vexation of spirit," I rejoice to think that I have long ago made choice of that "good part" which can never be taken from me, even the incorruptible inheritance of the faithful servants of God, "with whom there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

"Can thy servant," asks Barzillai, "taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women?" Perhaps not. But this is a small grievance to one who never made "a god of his belly," and who is able both to taste and to feast upon what is infinitely



more delicious than the most luxurious viands, with which earthly monarchs can pamper their favourites, even the *redeeming mercies of His God.*

It is the Christian's privilege, both in youth and age, to feed continually upon heavenly food. He lives by faith upon the body of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven that He might give "His flesh for the life of the world," and who says of Himself, "*I am the bread of life.*" The wine which he drinks, and of which he can procure an abundant supply, "without money and without price," is the blood of the adorable Son of God—which is the blood of the new covenant, shed for him and for many, *for the forgiveness of sins.* The word of God, which is his daily meditation, affords him the "sincere milk" of comfort and rejoicing: for this blessed word, his *spiritual appetite* is as strong as ever, and he is able to say with the Psalmist, "*How sweet are thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey unto my mouth.*" He can "taste and see that the Lord is gracious" unto him, and that He will "never fail him, nor forsake him;" for *though "his flesh and his heart may fail, yet God is the strength of his life, and his portion for ever."* He can discern and experience the full force of that blessed promise which the Lord makes to His faithful people by the mouth of His servant Isaiah

(46th chap. verse 4), "*And even to old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs I will carry you, I have made and I will bear, I also will carry and will deliver you.*" Though his outward ear may have lost the power of distinguishing sounds, and he can no longer hear the voice "of singing men and singing women," yet his inward ear is no stranger to the joyful sound of Gospel truth. The Spirit of the Saviour, from time to time, whispers peace to his soul; and he can easily discern the well-known voice of his Good Shepherd, cheering him with those words of comfort, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

Thus we find that the spiritual support and consolation, which faith in the Lord Jesus Christ enables the aged Christian to derive from the word of God, abundantly compensate him for any deprivation of earthly enjoyments, which the failure of his bodily senses may occasion him. Renunciation of worldly pleasures is with him not a matter of necessity but of *choice*. He has long been accustomed to "count himself a stranger and pilgrim on earth." He has long ago obeyed the Apostolic admonition, "*not to be conformed to this world,*" but to *deny himself, and come out and be separate* from its unholy pleasures and vain con-

versation. The increased seclusion, therefore, which old age brings along with it, so far from tending to make him gloomy or discontented, is, on the contrary, *most congenial to his previous habits and disposition*, and affords him more leisure for meditating upon those solemn subjects which are to him, beyond comparison, the most interesting and momentous. If he sees those he loves dropping off before him, he has the consolation of knowing that he will soon follow them; and in the mean time he has secured the everlasting friendship of Him who is immutably the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and who says, "*I am with thee always, even unto the end of the world.*" And, once more, if he be visited with grievous pain and infirmity of body, he is not dismayed, as though some strange thing happened to him, for he knows that this is the appointed lot of the Lord's people, in common with all the other children of fallen Adam. He remembers that it is "through much tribulation he must enter into the kingdom of God!" And he is sure that "these his comparatively light afflictions are working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; looking, as he does, not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen, for he knows that the things which are seen are but temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Thus it is that the hoary head of the *Christian* is indeed "a crown of glory, *because it is found in the way of righteousness.*" His grey-hairs are a source of honour and rejoicing, *because he has grown grey in the Lord's service.* So far from being a *burden* to their friends, such aged pilgrims are their pride and delight. It is a privilege to be near, and attend upon persons of this description, who may truly be termed, *Fathers and Mothers in Israel.* "When the ear hears them then it blesses them, and when the eye sees them it bears witness to them." The evening of their days is comparatively calm and pleasant, and when their sun goes down, it is with the assurance of a joyful rising. They descend into their graves "like a shock of corn," ripe for the sickle; and when "He who is the first-fruits of the heavenly harvest shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory."

Oh, what a blessed picture of old age is this, which has been drawn, not from imagination, but from *real life!* How unspeakably happy such a closing scene of our mortal existence! How desirable to ascertain in what way, or by what means, we, my Beloved Brethren, may be able to secure such a peaceful termination of our days as this which has been just described! This leads me, in conclusion, to address a few words; first, to my Youthful, and secondly, to my Aged Brethren.

To you, my *Young* Brethren, I would affection-

ately observe, that the only sure way to obtain a happy and honourable old age, is by sincerely devoting your lives to the service of God your Saviour. "Remember now thy Creator," says Solomon, "in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in Him." We have no reason, my Brethren, to look forward, either to a happy old age, or to a peaceful departure, if we premeditatedly devote our youth and manhood to the service of Satan and our own lusts. I know that it is a common way for young persons to pacify their consciences, by saying within themselves, "It is too soon yet for me to become religious. I shall indulge myself in the enjoyment of this world's pleasures as long as I feel a relish for them. It will be time enough to give them up and turn serious when I grow old, and am no longer capable of enjoying them." Fatal, miserable self-delusion! My Dear Young Brethren, beware how you permit the enemy of souls thus to deceive you to your everlasting destruction. What! Shall we seriously resolve to devote the prime of our life and strength to our own gratification, on the vain supposition that God will be satisfied with the wretched remnant of our days? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." If you find it so difficult a matter to repent and turn to Him now, while your affections are lively, your consciences comparatively tender,

and your sinful habits but newly formed, be assured that you will find it unspeakably more difficult to turn to Him later in life, when your affections will have grown cold, your consciences become callous, and your habits of sin and worldly-mindedness confirmed by length of years.

It is, alas ! but rarely, very rarely (comparatively speaking), that we witness conversions taking place in advanced life : for though, blessed be God, it is never too late for His grace to work in the sinner's heart, nor is any thing too difficult for it to overcome, when it has really commenced its operations therein ; still, sad experience proves, that those professing Christians, who have grown old in vanity and worldly-mindedness, are generally left to die as they have lived, strangers to the love of Christ, and uninfluenced by the renewing operations of His Holy Spirit. Their religion (if they profess any) is a bare "*form of godliness without the power thereof.*" It affords no real consolation or support to their declining years. They still cling to "creature comforts," as their only source of happiness, and when deprived of these, they are bereft of all that makes existence supportable.

May the consideration of this incline your hearts, my Dear Young Brethren, to turn to God your Saviour, now, without delay, and early in life to seek His grace and blessing, as above all things needful to you. Thus, whether you are permitted

to arrive at old age, or are cut off in the middle of your days, you are equally sure of finding acceptance with Him, who hath said, "I honour them that honour Me, and those that seek Me *early* shall find Me."

To you, my Aged Brethren, who have nearly arrived at the appointed limit of human life, and whose hearts are still uninfluenced by the saving grace of the Gospel of the Son of God, what shall I say! Alas! what *can* I say, that has not been already repeatedly said without effect? You are, indeed, my unhappy Brethren, in an awful situation, though not, perhaps, yourselves aware of it. You are tottering on the brink of a dreadful eternity! The pit of destruction is yawning to receive you! This world, with all its vanities, to which your hearts so fondly cling, is fast slipping from beneath your feet, and you are just on the point of being called into another, where there is nothing but "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!" Awake, awake, my unhappy Aged Brethren, ere yet it be too late. Rouse thyself, thou grey-headed sinner, from thy fatal slumber of carnal security, and call upon thy God and Saviour, if so be that He will hear thee, that thou perish not. He *will* yet hear thee, if thou callest upon Him with thine whole heart, in the name of His dear Son, Jesus Christ, who came to save all that believe in Him, no matter whether they be young or old. His

blood is yet able to wash out all your sins, how great and manifold soever they may be ! His grace is yet sufficient to renew and sanctify your aged heart, filled as it is with vanity and worldly-mindedness. Believe in Him and thou shalt yet be saved. Hearken to the affectionate warnings of His word and of His minister, now calling thee to repentance, and it may yet be said of thee, "*There is hope in thine end.*" It is still the accepted time. It is still the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. A day longer, and it may too late. "*Seek then, thou aged worldling, oh, seek the Lord, while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near ; let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, even to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*"

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*



## SERMON XIII.

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YOUTHFUL SINS THE OCCASION OF DEEP REPENTANCE TO THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

PSALM XXV. 7.

*Remember not the sins of my youth.*

SUCH is the prayer which the penitent monarch of Israel offered up to Almighty God in the deep contrition of his soul ; imploring Him not to keep in remembrance the offences of which he had been guilty in his youthful days, when his passions were strong and his grace so weak as not to be able always to resist the temptations with which he was surrounded, "Remember not (he exclaims) the sins of my youth !" That means, "Do not remember them against me *for evil*. Do not remember them in Thy wrathful indignation, to inflict that vengeance upon them which they so justly deserve ; but rather blot them out of the book of Thy remembrance altogether, and let them not be imputed for iniquity against my soul !"

Such, I say, my Brethren, is the substance of the Psalmist's words in our text, which lead us to treat of two things; *First*, The fact, that the sins of a man's youth, unless repented of, are all *had in remembrance* with God, and, as it were, noted down by Him against the day of judgment and retribution to the workers of iniquity. *Secondly*, The effect which the conviction of this awful truth produces upon the minds of those young persons who sincerely believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He Himself be pleased, of His infinite mercy, to bless the subject to all our souls, but especially to the edification of the *young*, to whom this discourse shall be particularly directed.

In the first place, the words of our text lead us, my Dear Young Brethren, to consider the solemn fact, that the Almighty God, "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid," marks all the sins and offences of our youth. He, as it were, registers in the book of His remembrance all the falsehoods we have uttered, all the evil words we have spoken, all the deceitful and dishonest actions which our hands have perpetrated or our hearts conceived, all the angry, revengeful, and uncharitable passions which we have harboured in our bosoms against any of our fellow-creatures, all the cruelty which we have manifested in our treatment of dumb

animals, all our undutiful expressions and behaviour to parents, or those placed in authority over us, all the impure and adulterous desires and actions in which we have secretly indulged, all our pride, envy, vanity, idleness, waste of time and of money, profanation of the Sabbath-day, in a word, all the neglect of God and disobedience to His commandments, of which we have been guilty in thought, word, or deed, and which had long ago escaped our own recollections.—All these sins, I say, of our childhood and youth, my Brethren, are (unless repented of) written down, as it were “*with an iron pen,*” in the book of God’s remembrance, for judgment against our souls on the day of His wrath and righteous vengeance upon the workers of iniquity! And, Oh, what a long black catalogue will some have presented to them on that awful day, of crimes which they had vainly hoped were forgotten by God, *because they were no longer remembered by themselves!*

It might almost seem unnecessary to lay such stress upon so obvious a truth as this, of which no one who seriously considers the subject can be supposed to entertain the slightest doubt. The repeated declarations which we read in the Sacred Scriptures of the infinite holiness and justice of God, in which He is set forth as of “*purer eyes than to behold iniquity;*” as “*a consuming fire to the ungodly;*” as having His face set “*against*

*them that do evil,*" and as being "*no respecter of persons,*" might seem sufficient of themselves to convince every one who acknowledges the Bible to be a Divine Revelation, of God's abhorrence of sin, and His determination to punish it wheresoever He finds it, without regard to the age of the offender. And yet such is the lamentable ignorance of Divine Truth which prevails throughout the great multitude of professing Christians, that an opinion directly opposite to this has been almost universally adopted.

The favourite maxim with nominal Christians is, that youth, if not an excuse, is at least an extenuation of sin! The offences which we commit against God in our early years, are commonly regarded as trifling in His sight. That a young man should be guilty of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, prodigality, blasphemy, or profane contempt of religion—That a young woman should be vain, light-minded, a lover of dress, of novels, of pleasure, more than of God, seems generally expected by their friends as a matter of course! And (such is the melancholy and total depravity of human nature that) the few who have grace to deny themselves, and refrain from these fashionable vices, are, for the most part, despised and laughed at by their neighbours, as persons of gloomy dispositions and mean understandings.

Nay, what is still more deplorable, there seems

to exist in the breasts of the great majority of parents, a secret wish to encourage this love of sin in the minds of their children, as is manifest from the lenient and palliative names which they apply to it. For example—The heinous crimes of adultery and seduction, which are necessarily followed by such inconceivable and irreparable misery, not merely to individuals, but even to whole families, are designated by the more inoffensive expressions of “*wildness and gallantry.*” A revengeful and blood-thirsty disposition is regarded as “*the proof of a high spirit, and a quick sense of honour.*” Prodigality is termed *generosity of mind.* And the “love of pleasure more than of God,” which an inspired Apostle has set down as the distinguishing mark of those who do not belong to the Lord’s people, is denominated an innocent gaiety of heart, *natural* to youth, (as if its being *natural* was a good reason why it should be regarded as *innocent!*)

Thus we find that the very names which are commonly applied to youthful vices too plainly prove to what a low ebb Christian morality has fallen amongst those who *profess* the religion of the Son of God. It is to be feared that most parents would much rather see their children very dissipated than *very religious.* Many who would start with horror to hear that their son or daughter had become a *Methodist*, (i. e. a *serious Christian*.)

are very little shocked, if at all, to hear their children termed "rakes, debauchees, duellists, gamblers, or unbelievers." And the consequence is, as might be expected, that young persons for the most part look upon themselves as having a free license to commit sin with impunity. Whatever gratifies the passions, or helps to pass away time agreeably, is pursued with greediness, without any regard to the question, "*What the Word of God pronounces respecting it.*" Every thing is decided to be "*innocent*" which the *laws of society do not pronounce to be criminal*. Fashion and reputation are regarded as the only right rules of conduct. And religion, if thought of at all, is only thought of to be neglected and postponed; (as to the serious practice of it) until *a more convenient season*.

But, my Dear Young Brethren, if any there be present who feel that these observations are at all applicable to themselves, be not deceived, your Creator is not to be thus mocked, or His law insulted with impunity. Youth is, with Him, *no excuse* for sin. Rebellion against His commandments is equally offensive in His sight, whether it be found in young or old. The young liar, the young blasphemer, the young adulterer, fornicator, drunkard, spendthrift, or voluptuary, are all as guilty and obnoxious to His divine vengeance, as if they were advanced in years. And the dread-

ful sentence, "Depart from Me *all ye workers of iniquity,*" is alike addressed both to the youthful and the aged offender.

It is very true indeed that our depraved passions being much stronger, and our love of pleasure more ardent in youth than in advanced life, are therefore more difficult to be restrained at that season than at any other; but this, be it remembered, does not furnish us with the least liberty or apology for indulging them, in defiance of God's repeated and positive commands, "*To deny ourselves—To mortify our members upon earth—To take up our cross and follow Christ—Yea, even to cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, rather than suffer our whole bodies to be cast into hell!*"

The very fact that our evil passions and propensities are stronger in youth than in age, furnishes us with the most convincing argument why they require us to be *more subdued* and restrained at that season than at any other. For, reflect, I beseech you, my Brethren, what a place this world would become, if the *strength* of our passions gave us a license to indulge them without control, and if the barriers of morality were to be broken down at the very season when licentiousness is ready to rush in like a flood, and to overwhelm all around it in confusion and destruction. Yet, *such must be the consequence, if the maxim be admitted, that*

*youth furnishes an excuse for sin ; which is, as it were, adding fuel to fire, and giving the rein to all the depraved passions of our nature, at the very time when their effects are most to be dreaded.*

Besides, what is it but a solemn mockery of our Creator, a premeditate affront offered to His Divine Majesty, to resolve that the earliest and best part of our lives shall be devoted to the service of Satan, and the unrestrained gratification of our sinful propensities, and that we may *put Him off, as it were, with the wretched remainder?* Is not this virtually saying, “ I will continue in allowed disobedience to God’s commandments as long as I am able. I will freely indulge myself in all manner of pleasure and sensual gratification, as long as I have the least inclination to do so ; and then, when I have grown old, and have no longer either the power or desire to enjoy the pleasures of sense, I can devote the dregs of my existence to repentance and the duties of religion. Is this the manner, my Brethren, in which your God deserves to be treated by you ? Is this the way in which you should repay the obligations you owe Him, or shew how high a value you set upon His divine love and favour, which if you do not possess, it were better that you had never been born ? Is it thus you fulfil those solemn promises and vows which were made for you in your baptism, and publicly renewed by your own lips at confirmation,



that you would *renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh ; and that you would faithfully keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life ?*

You reply, perhaps, that the pleasures of the world are so attractive that you cannot renounce them, that your love of sin is so strong that you find it *impossible* to forsake it ; that your evil passions are so powerful that you are utterly unable to restrain them at present ; but that you seriously resolve, at some future period, to “ *repent and turn to God.*” Alas, thus it is that the enemy of souls is daily deceiving thousands to their eternal destruction ! Oh, my Dear Young Brethren, beware, I beseech you, how you suffer yourselves to be thus fatally deluded. Experience unites with Scripture in testifying that repentance is *not in your own power*. You “ cannot (as the tenth article of our church truly declares) repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, *without His own especial and preventing grace enabling you to do so.*” Repentance is expressly declared to be the *gift of God the Saviour*, “ and must be earnestly sought for from Him, by hearty faith and fervent prayer.” The Lord Jesus Christ, it is written (in the 5th chapter of Acts and 31st verse), is “ *highly exalted as a Prince*

and Saviour to *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins ;” and if you *now* neglect to seek those blessings from Him according to His own appointed means, you have no reason to expect that He will ever, at any future period, vouchsafe to impart them unto you. On the contrary you will find that your power of repentance will every day become less and less. Your licentious passions will grow stronger instead of weaker, by repeated gratification. Your love of the pleasures and vanities of this world will increase instead of diminishing as you grow older. And your habits of sensual gratification will be more confirmed by every fresh indulgence.

Hearken then, Oh thou young sinner, to the friendly admonitions of heavenly wisdom, which speaks to thee by the mouth of God’s inspired servants, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, when thou shalt say, my soul hath no pleasure in Him !” “*Flee youthful lusts !*” Call to remembrance the awful warning which the wise monarch of Israel gives his son (in the 11th chapter of Eccles. and 9th verse), “Rejoice, Oh young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and after the sight of thine eyes—*But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.*”

Reflect, moreover, upon the daily instances you

witness of young sinners suddenly cut off in the midst of their abominations, and hurried, with all their iniquities upon their heads, before the tribunal of their holy and justly offended Judge. How many of our youthful friends and companions have been thus dealt with ! and how can you tell but that *your* turn may come next ? Surely it is nothing except the Lord's gracious forbearance that hath spared you so long ! Do not then, Oh do not, I beseech you, abuse His mercy and long-suffering any longer, but *now*, while time and opportunity are yet afforded you ; *now*, while you are blest with life, health, and the use of your faculties ; even *now*, *in the acceptable season of youth*, call upon Him with your whole heart for repentance and forgiveness in the name of His dear Son Jesus Christ, " who came to seek and to save that which was lost, to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Cry earnestly to that blessed Saviour for grace to overcome your evil passions, and for strength to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Call to mind the dreadful consequences which *must*, sooner or later, ensue from a perseverance in the ways of ungodliness—the accumulated guilt which it will heap upon your soul ! the *certain* misery and remorse you are thereby storing up for yourself, both in this world and in that which is to come !

And if you wish for the most decisive proofs

that the sins of youth are equally hateful in the sight of God, as those of age, turn to the infallible records of Scripture truth, and read the accounts which they contain of youthful sinners, who were made awful examples of His abhorrence of iniquity. There you will learn how God destroyed the whole human race (with the exception of eight persons) by a deluge of waters on account of their wickedness, *sparing none because of their tender years*, but overwhelming all, children, youths, and men, in one common destruction. There too you will read how He burnt up the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, with all their inhabitants, *young as well as old*, on account of their abominations. There, moreover, you will see the fearful doom which befel Er and Onan, the young sons of Judah, on account of their *uncleanness*. The terrible judgment visited upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, on account of their *presumptuous profanation of sacred things*. The awful vengeance inflicted upon Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli, because “they made themselves vile, *and their father restrained them not.*” The severe punishment pronounced by God Himself, in the 21st chapter of Deut. for *undutiful behaviour to parents*. And, once more, the marked indignation which He manifested against the *little children* of Bethel, for impiously mocking His ser-

vant Elisha, by sending two bears to devour them, at the word of the aged prophet. And surely, my Beloved Brethren, no one who acknowledges the truth of the Sacred Scriptures, and calls these facts to remembrance, can entertain the least doubt that sin is equally odious in God's sight, whether it be found in young or old; and that the most youthful offender against His laws is as obnoxious to His divine wrath, and as sure of meeting punishment, as the most aged.

Having thus considered the fact that the Lord does indeed remember the sins of our youth, and is prepared to take vengeance upon them at the day of final retribution—we proceed, in the second place, to consider the effect which the conviction of this awful truth produces upon the minds of those young persons who believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, a sincere turning of their hearts unto God in true repentance and unfeigned dependance on the Saviour. For although their number is comparatively but small, yet, blessed be God, there are a few young persons to be found, both males and females, who are not ashamed to confess "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," as their only Saviour, through whom they heartily seek forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and from whom they receive grace to gain the victory over their youthful lusts, to overcome

the fear of man, and “successfully to fight the good fight of faith against the world, the flesh, and the Devil.”

Happy they who are thus enabled to escape the snares and pollutions of an evil world, and to devote the morning of their lives to the service of their God and Saviour! To them His gracious invitation comes with power, “*Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, my Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?*” (3d Jer. 4.) And, like the young prodigal in the parable, being convinced of their guilty and ruined state, and seeing that there is neither happiness nor honour to be found in the ways of ungodliness, they arise and come to their Heavenly Father, and say unto Him, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants.” He, as it were, “*runs out to meet them*”—receives them with open arms—welcomes them as His beloved children, “*Who were dead but are now alive, who had been lost but are now found*”—washes them clean from all sin in the blood of His dear Son Jesus Christ—clothes them in the robes of His perfect righteousness—gives them the spirit of adoption, teaching them to call Him “Abba, Father”—and espouses them unto Himself in the bands of everlasting love and friendship.

Thus it was with Ephraim, or the mystical Israel, as represented in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, "I have surely heard Ephraim (saith the Lord) bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, turn Thou me, and I shall be turned, for Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, *because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*" "Is Ephraim *My dear Son?* is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still! Therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord!"

The language of such penitents is that of David in our text, "Oh remember not the sins of my youth!" The answer which *they* receive is in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, (54th chapter) "*Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall He be called.* And again, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thine iniquities, and

*will not remember thy sins."* And once more, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, *and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."*

Oh how blessed, how highly favoured, are those young persons (no matter what their condition or circumstances may be) who believe these gracious words, and are encouraged by these precious promises and invitations of their God, to turn *early in life* from the indulgence of fleshly lusts and passions; to reject, like Moses, the deceitful pleasures of sin which "are but for a season;" to break loose from their companions in dissipation and vanity; and heartily to seek for acceptance with that gracious Being who hath said, "I love them that love Me, and those that *seek Me early shall find Me.*"

The Sacred Scriptures, my Brethren, *abound* with instances of this youthful piety, which have been placed on record for our imitation and encouragement. Who has not read the history of Joseph, who, while yet a very young man, had this honourable testimony recorded of him that "*He feared God, and the Lord was with him!*" A remarkable proof of which is afforded in the memorable answer that he made to his wicked mistress, when she tempted him to commit adultery with her. "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Joseph, my Beloved Bre-



thren, was a man of like passions as we are; but "*He feared God,*" and steadily resisted the temptation, however strong, to commit an act, which he knew would be most offensive in His sight, and in direct rebellion against His holy laws. The child Samuel also, being favoured with that greatest of blessings a *religious mother*, served the Lord in His temple, at the age of seven years; and was honoured with His special grace at that early period, or perhaps, even earlier.

Obadiah also was not ashamed to acknowledge that he "*Feared the Lord from his youth.*" And so did the good king Josiah, of whom it is recorded (in the 34th chapter of 2d Chronicles) that "*In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, (being about sixteen years old) he began to seek after the God of his fathers.*" Once more, the commendation which the Apostle gave to his young friend Timothy, "*because that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation,*" affords another illustrious example of the blessed effects of an *early religious education*; and while it should stimulate parents (particularly *mothers*) to "*Train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,*" clearly proves that it is never too soon for grace to begin to work, or to expect a blessing upon a child's reading the Word of God, and

prayer: seeing that He has been thus graciously pleased to "*perfect praise* even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."

Besides, when we consider the unspeakably blessed consequences which ensue to the individual in after life, from an early consecration of himself to the service of his God and Saviour, this furnishes us with another powerful incentive to youthful piety. For oh, what a multiplicity of temptations and dangers, both temporal and spiritual, do they escape, who are early restrained by Divine Grace from yielding to the dominion of their headstrong passions! What unutterable misery, both of body and soul, do they avoid, who are withheld by the "Fear of the Lord," from plunging into that vortex of fashionable dissipation in which the youth of both sexes are, for the most part, immersed immediately on their entrance into life! What a beneficial effect has it upon the human mind, to be early habituated to that *voluntary* discipline and self-denial, which nothing but a deep sense of religion, proceeding from faith in the Gospel of the Son of God, is able to produce! And how much more likely are those young persons to make themselves *respected* even in this world, and to "increase in the favour of man as well as God," who are accustomed to reverence their Bible, to take it as their rule of life, and to submit

in all things to be guided by its holy precepts and maxims of Heavenly wisdom !

Such young persons may frequently say with the Psalmist, "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation."—"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." Truly does the Prophet Jeremiah affirm, "*It is good for a man thus to bear the yoke in his youth!*" While others are running their headlong career to everlasting destruction, laying up for themselves a certain store of remorse and wretchedness, and filling up a long black catalogue of crimes, which will at length sink their souls into the bottomless pit; they who are thus early in life led by grace to "fear God and keep His commandments," are, like the blessed Jesus Himself, "growing in wisdom as they grow in stature." Such "*flowers offered in the bud, are no vain sacrifice,*" they are indeed plants of righteousness in the Lord's house, "rooted and grounded in Immanuel's love." They are true "*children of grace,*" nourished from infancy in the bosom of the Saviour, with the "sincere milk of His Word; growing from grace to grace, and from strength to strength," and gratefully dedicating to their Creator the first fruits of their faculties and affections :

"Thus they're prepar'd for longer days,  
Or fit for early death."

Of them it may be truly said, that "whether they live, they live unto the Lord, or whether they die, they die unto the Lord, so that, whether living or dying, they are the Lord's."

While other young persons learn to lie, to steal, to blaspheme, to be undutiful, to give place, without respect of consequences, to every impure and malignant passion, and thus grow up with the curse of Almighty God upon their souls, to be perhaps the pests of society, the shame and disgrace of their parents—The children of grace, on the contrary, learn betimes to "search the Scriptures," to hold communion with their God in prayer, and to take pleasure in those things which please Him and render them meet for an entrance into His heavenly kingdom. Habits of religion thus formed in youth, grow easier with advancing years. What at first seemed irksome, soon becomes delightful. "The ways of religion do indeed appear ways of pleasantness, and its paths the paths of peace" to those who are early habituated to walk in them. And the inward satisfaction and peace of mind which the young Christian experiences in the road of duty, abundantly compensate him for the loss of those vain pleasures and sensual gratifications which he has renounced in obedience to his Bible.

May the Lord of His infinite mercy incline your souls, my Dear Young Brethren, to profit by what has been said, and early in life to seek Him with

your whole heart. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "Behold," saith the blessed Jesus, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man will open unto Me I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

But if you will not hearken to these solemn warnings; if you obstinately persist in turning a deaf ear to these gracious and oft-repeated invitations of your God and Saviour—be assured that the time will come, either in this world or the next, when you will bitterly bewail your depraved infatuation, and exclaim with unavailing anguish, "*How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ears to them that instructed me!*"

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON XIV.

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### THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGES.

1 CORINTHIANS III. part of 21st and following  
verses.

—*All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

IT is a lamentable proof, my Christian Brethren, of the weakness of our faith, that we, for the most part, *live so far below our privileges*. For that the privileges of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ must be unspeakably glorious, is manifest from various considerations.

First, the simple fact that the adorable Son of God took our fallen nature upon Him, and laid down His life, amidst such complicated sufferings,

for the express purpose of procuring these privileges for all who believe in Him, is of itself sufficient to give us very exalted notions respecting them. For if the value of a thing may be fairly estimated by its price, surely those privileges can not be rated too highly, which cost the adorable Son of God His life; and if any there be who speak lightly of them, they forget that, in so doing, they are undervaluing the price at which they were purchased.

A second argument in proof of the greatness of the Christian's privileges, may be drawn from what He is required to give up for their sake. And since we are called upon *to be willing* (if necessary) *to give up every thing for Christ's sake*—Since we are required, not merely to renounce our favourite pleasures and gratifications, so far as they are incompatible with our allegiance to Him, but also to submit to disgrace and suffering, and to be prepared to give up father and mother, and husband and wife, and children and brethren, and houses and lands, and titles and dignities, and, *even our very lives themselves*, should His glory require it from us; we may conclude with certainty, that the privileges which accrue to us from fidelity to the crucified Saviour, must be exceeding valuable indeed, in order that they may prove an *adequate compensation* for the sacrifices we are frequently required to make for them.

And a third argument in demonstration of the greatness of the Christian's privileges, is deducible from the repeated exhortations addressed by the Apostle to believers, *to unceasing gratitude and joyfulness.* In one place he exhorts us to "rejoice in the Lord *always*, and again he says rejoice." In another place, he directs us, "*In every thing to give thanks.*" He repeatedly speaks of himself and his fellow Apostles, as "sorrowful, yet *always rejoicing.*" "*Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*" But why, let us ask, this continual joy, even under the most afflictive dispensations? What cause can there be for such *unceasing* thankfulness, in circumstances more calculated to excite discontent and despondency? Doubtless, in order to answer these questions satisfactorily, we must have recourse to the consideration of the *exceeding greatness of the Christian's privileges*; for surely those privileges must be inconceivably great, which can afford ground, not only for consolation, but even for continual rejoicing and thanksgiving, under every possible tribulation or calamity with which we may be visited.

The question, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, which remains to be cleared up is,—*Not*, are the Christian's privileges great? *but, are we able to live up to those privileges?* Can we obey the directions of the Apostle, when he exhorts us, to "rejoice in the Lord *always*," and "*in every thing to give*



thanks?" Alas! I fear, there are but few comparatively, whose strength of faith enables them to answer this question in the affirmative.

Permit me, then, to propose another, even still more important. Have we, my Brethren, *any right to partake in these glorious privileges?* Are we *sincere believers* in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? *Has our faith in Him produced in us true repentance, and humble dependance upon His merits and sufferings, as alone able to secure our complete salvation?* Are we really looking to *Christ crucified as our only foundation of hope*—the all-in-all of our acceptance with God? And do we earnestly endeavour, as far as in us lies, to take *His commandments as the rule of our lives, and His promises as the consolation of our souls?* If we do, we have the blessed privilege of applying the language of the Apostle in our text to ourselves, and of being assured, that "*all things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*"

Oh, what a privilege, or rather, what a multitude of privileges, do these words of the Apostle convey to our minds! Let us devoutly pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable us rightly to comprehend them in all their fulness and connection. It is a good thing for us, my Christian

Brethren, frequently to meditate upon our privileges as well as our duties. It is like a prudent warrior, in time of peace, burnishing his armour and sharpening his weapons, that he may be ready for action when the next campaign calls him into the field. Thus should it be also with "*the good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" He, too, ought to be always preparing for battle against his spiritual enemies; for however smoothly and peaceably things may seem to go on for a while, it will not always be thus with him. The storm is gathering when the atmosphere seems calmest. Sooner or later we may be sure that the day of trial will come upon every one of us. None of us can tell how great suffering or deprivation we may be called to undergo, for Christ's sake, before we leave this world: but of this we may be certain, that we *must* pass through tribulation of some kind or another, in our way to the kingdom of heaven. And when the day of sorrow does arrive (which it may, much sooner than we flatter ourselves), it is then that the importance of our having distinct views of our privileges as Christians, will appear most forcibly. For it is these privileges which principally render the religion of the Gospel such an inestimable blessing to those who believe it;—on account, namely, of the support and consolation they afford to the Christian's soul, in seasons of deep affliction, when all other supports fail. As for that religion, or

that profession of Christianity, which, like a leaky boat, only serves for smooth water sailing, but sinks when the tempest rises, and leaves us to struggle as we can with the angry billows of adversity ; it is not worth the trouble which its profession costs us.

“ *All things,*” says the Apostle to the Corinthian Christians, “ *are yours.*” It is unnecessary to remind you, my Brethren, that the members of the church of Corinth, to whom these words were addressed, had been accustomed to take but a very mean estimate of their privileges as Christians. So weak was their faith, and so carnal their views, that they gloried *in men* far more than in Christ, and placed much greater confidence in their own attainments, than in the Saviour’s all-sufficiency. But the Apostle, in our text, endeavours to inspire their minds with more exalted notions, and leads them to take more just and worthy views of the blessings procured for them by the Redeemer’s merits and sufferings. Let us, therefore, in our consideration of this remarkable passage, follow the order of the Apostle’s words ; in which he proves, by an enumeration of particulars, that God has, in the gift of His beloved Son, “ freely given us *all things* pertaining unto life and godliness ;” and (as he says also in the 8th chapter of the Romans) “ that He causeth *all things* to work together for good, to those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose.”

In the first place, then, my Christian Brethren, by virtue of our spiritual union with the Son of God, as our Covenant Head, "all things are ours," forasmuch as "all things are *Christ's* by right of inheritance." The Father, we are informed, hath appointed Him "*heir of all things.*" As king of that church or elect company of redeemed souls for whom He laid down His life, and whom He purchased unto Himself with His own blood, "the government is laid upon His shoulders." "All power (He informs us) is committed unto Him in heaven and in earth. He is appointed Head over all things, for His body the church; and all things, both temporal and spiritual, are put in subjection under His feet." If, therefore, we be true believers in this omnipotent Saviour, (whose essential Godhead is clearly proved by the Almighty power which he exercises as Mediator)—If, I say, we be "*one with Him,*" by a true and living faith, we have the privilege of knowing that, in this sense of the words, *all things must be ours.* No matter how mean or distressed we may be in our worldly circumstances, we possess in Christ a *hidden treasure*—a mine of wealth, which the revenue of kings could not purchase for us; and may truly describe ourselves, in the language of the Apostle, as "*Having nothing, yet possessing all things.*" Our faith in the adorable Son of God at once comprehends, and gives us a right to every other blessing.

He is Himself the substance of every thing that is truly desirable. If Christ be ours, we may be sure that every thing which is in any respect needful or beneficial, either to our souls or bodies, is our's also; for His kingly power and government are continually exercised for the welfare of His believing people. He is the "Good Shepherd that laid down His life for His sheep;" and if we are amongst those sheep which "*know His voice, and follow His call,*" we can want no really good thing, either in time or eternity.

But still, more particularly, if we be true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all His faithful ministers, whether Paul, Apollos, Peter, or by whatever name they may be called, are *ours*, i. e. they are "our ministering servants," appointed by the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, to "wait upon those who shall be heirs of salvation." For if it be true, as we are informed in the 1st chapter of Hebrews, that the very angels of heaven are ordained to minister to the wants and necessities of the Lord's people—If the highest ambition of St. Paul's heart was "to spend and be spent in the service of the church"—Nay, if even the Lord of glory Himself, when He descended upon earth, clad in our fallen nature, deigned (Oh marvellous love) to "take upon *Him the form of a servant,*" and came, as He declares, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His

life a ransom for our sinful souls ;" how much more may it be said of His *uninspired* servants whom He hath called unto His ministry, that they are, in a peculiar sense, the property of His people ! Their bodily strength is given them to be devoted to the active service of the church—Their various gifts, graces, and mental endowments, are all intended to be exercised for the spiritual benefit of those who look up to them for direction—Their worldly possessions, if they have any, must be regarded as a fund especially set apart for the relief of the needy and distressed—And, in a word, their whole lives must be considered, in a sense, as consecrated to the exclusive service of their several flocks ; to the instruction of the ignorant, the comfort of the afflicted, the support of the weak, and the edification of all.

Those Christians, therefore, who, like the Corinthians of old, are accustomed to range themselves under different ministers, and to say, in the spirit of strife and emulation, "I follow such a one, and I another, and I a third ;" do thereby prove that they are, as yet, in a very carnal state, that they possess very little of a catholic spirit, and that they take but very mean and narrow views of their Christian privileges. The spiritually minded believer, on the contrary, rises far superior to these petty party distinctions and emulations. His eye, through faith, looks beyond the minister, to Him

that sent him. And he is willing to welcome all that come to him as ambassadors of peace, in the name of "Christ crucified," whose Gospel they faithfully preach. For, "who is Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, or any other preacher," but ministers of the Son of God, and of His believing people? each endued with those various gifts and talents which their Master has been pleased to impart to them, and all conscientiously working together in the Lord's vineyard, according to the measure of the grace that is given unto them. Thus "Paul planteth, and Apollos watereth; but it is the Lord alone that giveth the increase." Therefore, "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but the Lord that giveth the increase." And "To some churches He giveth Apostles, to some Prophets, to some Evangelists, to some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come, in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Further, *The world*, and all that it contains, my Christian Brethren, is, in a sense, to be regarded as our own property, forasmuch as, if we be Christ's, every thing in the world is made subservient to our spiritual welfare. Its good things are ours, as far as He sees that the enjoyment of

them is beneficial to us ; and none of its evils can possibly injure us, because they are all overruled and controlled by His Providence, who “ ordereth all things in heaven and earth, according to the counsel of His sovereign will, so that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His permission.”

If then it has pleased Him to afford us an abundant share of the good things of this world, let us remember whose stewards we are, and earnestly implore His grace, that we may “ *so use this world as not to abuse it ; knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away.*” And, if it has pleased Him to withhold from us those good things which others enjoy, let us be thankful for the portion allotted to us, and rest satisfied that it is for our advantage that we are kept in poverty. “ For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof”—“ The silver and the gold (He says,) are Mine ; the beasts of the forest also are Mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills”—“ It is He that maketh poor and maketh rich”—“ He putteth down one, and setteth up another, according to His own good will and pleasure.” And if it has pleased Him, of His infinite mercy, to make us “ *rich in grace, and heirs of incorruptible treasure,*” we have no reason to murmur because He hath fixed our lot amongst the poor of this world ; for “ Godliness, with contentment, is great gain.”



Yea, "better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great riches and trouble therewith."

It was this consideration which enabled St. Paul to say, "*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* I know both how to be abased and how to abound; in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." "Yea," he says, in another place, "*I have all and abound;*" thereby meaning, that he abounded in every thing which his Master saw to be in any way needful or profitable to him. And it is our privilege, my Beloved Brethren, to say the same. For, again,

"*Life is ours.*" Our gracious God hath, in the Gospel of His dear Son Jesus Christ, "*given us the promise both of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come.*" He is Himself the life both of our souls and bodies; "our life is hid with Christ in God;" and "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." As long, therefore, as it pleases Him to continue us in this mortal life, we may be sure that He intends it for our advantage; and, therefore, so long we need not fear but that He will provide us with those things which are necessary for our support.

"The life itself," as our blessed Lord declares, "*is more than meat, and the body than raiment.*" If, then, He supplies us with the *greater blessing,*

we cannot doubt that He will grant us the lesser also. He that "clothes the grass of the field, and feedeth the young ravens that cry unto Him," surely will not permit His faithful and obedient people to perish with hunger. Nay, His own promise is directly pledged in our support. "Bread shall be given thee," He says, "thy water shall be sure"—"He giveth meat to them that fear Him, He will ever be mindful of His covenant." Hence we learn, my Brethren, that it is our blessed privilege, "To cast all our care upon God, for He careth for us." "Be not ye, therefore, over careful respecting what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed, but seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, *and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

Nor is it merely with respect to our subsistence in this world, that we are privileged to cast all our care upon God; but, also, with respect to the time and manner of our departure out of it. For not only life, but moreover *death* also is *ours*. It is the glorious privilege of believers in Christ crucified, to rejoice and triumph even over the King of Terrors himself, knowing that he has lost all power to hurt them. He cannot so much as shake his dart at us without our Lord's permission; and when he comes to remove us from this mortal life, he appears as the messenger not of

evil, but of eternal blessing to our souls. If we, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, are able to say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ;" we may also say with him, "To die is *gain*." If, while we live, conscience testifies that we are endeavouring to "*live unto the Lord*," we may be certain that "when we die, we shall *die unto the Lord*." So, then, "whether living or dying we are the Lord's;" and, "with Him are the issues both of life and death."

We should not, then, allow ourselves to be terrified or dejected by reflecting either upon death itself, or upon the form and circumstances in which it may meet us. For, however terrible the separation of soul and body may seem to our natural minds, yet, if we believe that the Son of God "died for us and rose again," we have a never-failing ground of comfort and encouragement, and are privileged to say with David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." "The sting of death," we are informed, "is sin;" but "the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "The strength of sin is the law;" but "we are no longer under the law but under grace." Christ has "through death, overcome him that hath the power of death, that is the devil;" and His words now are, "I am the resurrection and

the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." It is in this sense, therefore, my Brethren, that the declaration of the Apostle in our text is to be understood, when he says, that "*Death is ours*," i. e. it is our *gain*—a matter of joy and thanksgiving to every sincere believer. It is the end of pain and sorrow, the commencement of eternal glory and blessedness. Even the death of our dearest friends, though the bitterest ingredient in our cup of mortal suffering, shall, we may be sure, in some way or another, be made conducive to our eternal good. And, if we have reason to hope that they departed this life in the faith of Christ crucified, we have unspeakable cause for exultation. For, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Yea, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

Finally, to sum up all in a few words, it is our privilege, my Christian Brethren, to believe of every thing, both of "things present and things to come," that "*all are ours*." All *present* circumstances, whether joyous or afflicting, are pre-ordained and overruled by a gracious Providence to work together for our good. Nothing happeneth by chance, nor has the enemy the least power to bring about any thing to the injury of those "who

have the seal of God in their foreheads." Our loving Saviour hath our interest at heart, in every thing He ever has, or ever shall bring to pass. The very afflictions with which he "scourgeth us," are certain proofs of His paternal affection, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." And when our afflictions, however grievous, are sanctified by prayer, we feel them to be unspeakably profitable to our souls. Thus the sufferings and death of those we love, tend to wean our hearts from this world, and excite us to "set our affections on things above, not on things below." The disappointments and trials which we meet with in our temporal concerns, convince us that every thing beneath the sun is but "vanity and vexation of spirit." Yea, our very bodily deprivations and sufferings, teach us the uncertainty of our mortal existence, and remind us to prepare more diligently to meet our God, and to "fix our hopes and expectations *there*, where true joys only can be found."

And as it is with things *present*, so is it also in respect of things *to come*. We need be under no apprehensions regarding futurity. Many sincerely pious, but timid children of God, are in the habit of tormenting themselves with doubts and fears respecting the trials that await them in this world; and are accustomed to distract their minds with thinking "How should I bear up were I placed

in such and such afflicting circumstances?" "How should I be ever able patiently to endure such and such terrible agonies of mind or body?" To all questions of this kind our gracious Lord has been pleased to give an answer, which it is the privilege of those who sincerely believe in Him, to apply to themselves individually. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy day is so shall thy strength be"—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."—"Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness"—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle around thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour."

"Let not your hearts, therefore, be troubled, neither let them be afraid; ye believe in God, believe also in Christ." For once more, as it is with things temporal, so is it likewise with respect to things eternal. "We know," saith the Apostle, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "For beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth

not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and every one that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure." Thus, my Brethren, we see the truth of the Apostle's words, "that though Christ was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich."

To conclude, What is it, let us ask, that secures these unspeakable privileges unto us, my Beloved Brethren? What is the ground of our confidence, that we are *really* partakers in these inestimable blessings, these "*unsearchable riches*," which are so abundantly provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for all His believing people? This is, indeed, a most important question, and one which deserves our gravest consideration. For of this we may rest assured, it is not the *name* of Christian; it is not the outward profession of Christianity, it is not the regular attendance upon Christian forms and ceremonies, the calling Christ "*Lord, Lord*," with our lips, the eager following after favourite preachers, nor yet the abstaining from *disreputable* vices, and maintaining "a form of godliness, without the power thereof," that can entitle us to a participation in any of these privileges.

The question (as was stated at the commencement of the discourse) is resolvable into this, Are

we *true believers* in the adorable Son of God? Does our faith work in our hearts by sincere love to Himself, and obedience to His commandments? Have we been brought by the power of His grace to see our own utter vileness and worthlessness?—our *total want of every thing good in ourselves*—and our *entire dependence upon Him for all things*; for the preservation of our bodies in this world, as well as for the salvation of our souls in the world to come? If our consciences testify that this is indeed our case, we may be certain that all these privileges, are perfectly and eternally secured unto us, and the ground of our assurance is *this*, “we are *Christ’s*: He hath bought both our bodies and souls unto Himself, with the price of His own precious blood.” And as “in Him *all fulness dwells*,” “so from His fulness do all we receive, and grace for grace.” In Him we have obtained that inestimable treasure, “that pearl of great price,” for the sake of which, His faithful servant Paul “counted all other things but loss, and judged them to be dung.” Nor need we fear that having once obtained, we shall ever lose it, seeing that *Christ is God’s*—He is the “well beloved Son,” to whom the Father has *eternally given us*, as the stipulated reward of His sufferings, and obedience unto death, and “*none* can pluck us out of His hands.” His Father which gave us unto Him, is *greater than*



*all*, and none can pluck us out of His Father's hands, "*He and His Father are one.*" Thus then, being, by, a true faith, united for ever to Christ, as our covenant head, we are *in* and *through Him*, eternally united to God. "And what shall separate us, my Brethren, from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. And we may be persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON XV.

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### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANTS.

#### HEBREWS IX. 15.

*And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

THERE are some passages in the sacred Scriptures, particularly in the writings of St. Paul, which, in few words, comprehend a copiousness of meaning, more easily understood than expressed. And our text is one of these passages. Were we to set about considering every member of this portion of Scripture, with that attention which it deserves, we should find that it would furnish abundant matter, not merely for one, but for several discourses. I shall not, therefore, detain

your attention from it, my Beloved Brethren, longer than while I observe, that the frequent recurrence which we meet with in Scripture of such passages as this, in which a whole system of sound divinity is, as it were, without the least premeditation, embodied in two or three sentences, furnishes the reflecting mind with an irresistible internal evidence of their divine original. For the depth of reasoning contained in these passages calls forth all the powers of our understandings. Their consistency and systematic arrangement excite our astonishment. Their simplicity demands our admiration. And their entire tenor proves, beyond doubt, that they were the spontaneous effusions of a mind completely imbued with its subject, and deeply convinced both of the certainty and importance of those things whereof he was treating.

“And for this cause (saith the Apostle) He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” With respect to the word *Mediator*, (which signifies *a middle agent*, or one who acts between two parties,) it may not be unreasonable to observe, in answer to those who object against the doctrine of mediation between God and His creatures, that it is *no new idea*.

For, exclusive of the fact, that all God's works of creation and providence are carried on by the instrumentality of middle agents or second causes, we find, on reference to the writings of the ancients, that the existence of mediators, or *middle spirits* who act between the Creator and His creatures, was one of the doctrines of heathen mythology, derived doubtless from an original, but corrupted revelation. Thus Plato saith, "Every demon (or genius) is a *middle agent between God and mortal man*." And again, "God is not approached by man, but all the commerce and intercourse between Gods and men, is by the mediation of demons," (or inferior spirits\*). Apuleius also, a later philosopher, gives a similar description: "Demons," he says, "are middle powers, by whom both our desires and deserts pass unto the Gods; they are *carriers* between men on earth and Gods in heaven, they convey to and fro petitions and supplies, &c."†

Hence we learn that the doctrine of a mediator between the Creator and his creatures, so far from being *contrary to reason*, as some assert, is, on the contrary, almost deducible from it alone. And the grand distinction between the notions of Polytheism, and the doctrine of the New Testament on this subject, is, that whereas the former in-

\* Platonis Sympos. p. 202. vol. 3. Ed. Ser.

† Apul. de Deo Socratis, p. 674. &c. Delph.

structed its deluded votaries to trust in "Gods many and Lords many," the latter assures us that "there is" but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." For as Moses was, in a sense, the mediator between God and the Israelites, inasmuch as it was through his instrumentality that the law was revealed to them, so, in a far more exalted sense, the Lord Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of God, is "the Mediator of a *better covenant, founded upon better promises.*"

And this leads me further to observe, what most of you are probably already aware of, that the very same word which in our text is translated "*Testament*," is, in various other passages of St. Paul's writings, (as for instance in the latter verses of the preceding chapter,) translated "*Covenant*;" nor is it easy to conjecture what motive could have induced our venerable translators to render it by a different word in the passage before us; for here, as in some other places, the diversity of terms occasions, to the unlearned reader, an uncertainty with regard to the real meaning of the passage. For clearness, therefore, I shall take the liberty, in the following discourse, of using the word in that sense which the context proves to be most applicable to it; and shall beg to substitute the word "*Covenant*" instead of "*Testament*." And for this cause," saith Paul; "He (the Lord Jesus

Christ) is the Mediator of the *New Covenant*." Why? In order that *by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*" These words, my Brethren, lead us to consider, in the first place, the nature of that which the Apostle calls "*the First Covenant*," and, Secondly, of that which he terms "*the New Covenant*."

With respect to that which the Apostle here calls the *First Covenant*, and which, in the last verse of the preceding chapter, is alluded to under the name of the "*covenant which waxeth old and was ready to vanish away*"—we learn, by a quotation adduced by the Apostle from the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, that it was the same with that made by Almighty God with the children of Israel "*in the day,*" or at the time, when He brought them up out of the land of Egypt. "*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them up out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.*" These words, I say, of the Prophet and Apostle, manifestly refer us to the period of Israel's deliverance from Egypt,

for the commencement of the *old* covenant between God and His people. And accordingly, in the 19th chapter of Exodus, and 5th verse, we find Him entering into the following agreement with them; "Now, therefore, saith the Lord, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and *keep My covenant*, then ye shall be unto Me a peculiar treasure above all people, for all the earth is Mine, and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." And again, in the 24th chapter of Exodus, 6th, 7th, and 8th verses, we are informed that "Moses took half of the blood of the oxen which he had slain in sacrifice, and put it into basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, and he took the *book of the covenant* (i. e. the law of the *ten commandments*) and read in the audience of all the people, and they said, '*All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient.*' And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, behold the blood of *the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.*"

With respect to this sprinkling of blood, and calling it the "*blood of the covenant*," (which expression is also applied by the blessed Jesus Himself to His own blood,) it is to be kept in mind, not only that the "law was a pattern of good things to come," of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, but also, that the word

“covenant,” in its general acceptation, signifies a solemn treaty, or agreement, between two parties to do such and such things ; which solemn treaties were usually confirmed (as we read in the 34th chapter of Jeremiah, and the 18th verse) by spilling the blood of a calf in sacrifice, and after dividing it, causing each party to pass between its halves. And this consideration serves to explain, what would otherwise seem a very obscure passage of the chapter, from which our text is taken ; I mean the four verses immediately following the text. According to the manner in which we find them translated in the present version, it is difficult to ascertain the connection between them, and the immediate subject of which the Apostle was treating, for they speak not of *a covenant confirmed by blood*, but of a “*will or testament*, which is not in force, till after the death of the testator.”

But the original words of this passage, in the Greek Scripture, bear a quite different construction ; and as some commentators have, I think, clearly proved, *that* construction is the right one. According to it, the passage should be translated thus ; 16th verse, “For where a covenant is (made) there must, of necessity, be the death of *some (animal) offered in sacrifice*. For a covenant is of force when it is made *over a dead body*, otherwise it is of no force while the *(animal) offered in sacrifice is alive*. Wherefore, neither



was the first covenant dedicated without blood, for when Moses had spoken every precept according to the law (of the ten commandments) he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the covenant (not testament) which God hath enjoined you." That this is the true rendering of the passage seems evident from the context; and the conclusion to which it leads us is, that the First covenant alluded to by the Apostle was (as has been already shewn) the agreement entered into between Almighty God and His people Israel as a nation, through Moses as a middle man, ratified by the blood of bulls and goats, that He would adopt them unto Himself, to be His own peculiar nation out of all the nations of the world, and that He would bless them above all other people, with an abundance of spiritual and temporal blessings, provided that they, on their parts, would faithfully "keep and observe to do all the words of that holy law, which He had just delivered to them, out of the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai." To which conditions all the people solemnly assented, saying to Moses, "All the words of this covenant we will do and be obedient."

We learn from this part of the subject, my Beloved Brethren, that we should beware of rashly

making vows and resolutions of obedience to God, *in dependence upon our own strength or free will*; for if we do, we shall most certainly violate them, since of ourselves we *can do nothing*.

In all cases it is much safer to *pray* than to resolve; for, as Solomon says, in 5th Eccles. ver. 5. "It is better *not to vow*, than to vow and *not to pay*." Experience proves, that the good resolutions which we make in reliance upon our own strength, are, in times of temptation, like the morning dew which passeth away before the heat of the meridian sun! This great *national covenant*, so solemnly ratified between Jehovah and His chosen people Israel, was scarcely made until it was broken! In less than forty days after they had so positively engaged to worship none other God than Him, and to make no graven image, we find them, with their high priest Aaron at their head, bowing down before the image of a calf, and crying out, in the stultidity of their hearts, "These be thy gods, Oh Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And Moses, when he descended from the mount, and saw what the people had done, was so justly incensed, that, in his wrath, he brake to pieces the two tables of stone on which the law of the ten commandments had been inscribed—a significant token that "*by the works of that broken law no flesh living could be justified.*"

My Brethren, the conduct of the infatuated Israelites on this occasion, naturally excites both our amazement and indignation. But which of us, I would ask, has a right to cast a stone of condemnation against them? Have not we also broken this covenant of the holy law of our God? Have not we likewise sinned against the clearest light of revelation and our own consciences? If we have not, like the idolatrous Israelites, imitated their Egyptian taskmasters, in bowing down our *heads* before the image of a *cow* or a *calf*, have we not too often bowed down our *hearts* in servile obedience to *our own evil lusts and passions*? Is not the covetousness of many amongst us virtual idolatry? Has it not caused us, as it were, to set up a golden image of mammon in our breasts, and to serve it far more faithfully and zealously than we have served our Creator? Which of us can lay his hand upon his heart, and say that he has conscientiously obeyed, or even *striven* to obey that first and great commandment of God's law, which saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thine heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy strength, and with *all* thy mind?" Do not our consciences, alas! testify, my Dear Brethren, that we have been "lovers of pleasure," lovers of our own selves, lovers of our families, our friends, our personal gratifications, and, in a word, of the things of this present world far more than lovers of God?

How often have each of us premeditatedly broken those solemn promises and vows which were made for us at baptism, and renewed, perhaps, with our own lips at confirmation, that we would "Renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; and that we would faithfully keep God's holy word and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our lives." Does not a long black catalogue of grievous transgressions rise up in each of our consciences at this question? Must we not all acknowledge that we are indeed "offenders against God's holy law, that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and that we have done those things which we ought not to have done?" And shall we then pretend to boast that we are better than the backsliding Israelites—or that we have more to hope for from the broken covenant of works than they had? No, my Brethren, in no wise. The conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness, and indeed throughout the whole of their remarkable history, furnishes us with a lively example of the wickedness and folly of which the heart of fallen man is capable. Scripture unites with experience in testifying that human nature is the same in all men, both Gentiles and Jews. The same holy and spiritual law hath, as St. Paul declares to the Romans, "brought in the whole world alike guilty before God." And,

verily, if we are *under the law*, i. e. if we are *trusting for acceptance with God, either in whole or in part, unto our obedience to the covenant of works, we are still under the curse.*" As the Apostle declareth, "As many as are of the law are under a curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

We now proceed, in the second place, to consider the nature of that *new covenant*, to which St. Paul so frequently alludes in various parts of his writings, as well as in our text. And here it may not be amiss to consider the reason which he assigns for making this new covenant at all, "Because?" as he informs us in the 8th chap. 7th and 8th verses, "the old covenant had been *found faulty*"—"For finding fault with it," he says, "behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel," &c. Now wherein, let us enquire, consisted the fault or imperfection of this first covenant? Did it lie on God's part of it? Nay, Brethren, the law of the ten commandments, as coming from God, was, as the Apostle says, "Holy, and just, and good;" and the promise was sure on His part, that the man who faithfully obeyed it, in all its spirituality and extent, "should live by it." Its imperfection; therefore, consisted not in any thing in itself, but in the total depravity and moral inability of fallen man to fulfil its con-

ditions. The law, or covenant of works, was "*weak through the sinfulness of our flesh.*" For, "the law is spiritual, but we are carnal, sold under sin;" and, there is "a law in our members continually warring against the law of our mind, (i. e. our conscience) and bringing us, more or less, into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members." These words, I say, in which the Apostle so pathetically describes his own condition, may surely, with equal propriety, be applied to every child of fallen Adam.

The law is indeed *spiritual*. It requires truth in the *inward parts*. It pronounces every evil lust, desire, or covetous imagination of our hearts, to be sin in the sight of God; and as such, rendering us obnoxious to the curse. But man is *carnal*. His nature is "Earthly, sensual, devilish." And the utmost that he can, by his own strength, render to this spiritual and perfect law, is the formal imperfect obedience of his outward man.

Yea, our very *inability* to fulfil the conditions of this holy law, does itself aggravate our guilt, because it is a *moral* inability, proceeding from the depravity of our *wills*: which are, by nature, turned from God and inclined only to evil. And this our moral inability to obey God's commandments, proceeding from the perverseness of our *wills*, the law or covenant of works is not able to rectify. It only brings us to a knowledge of our

duty, but neither affords us the will nor the power to perform it. The thunders and lightnings of Sinai may terrify us indeed, but they can neither convert our hearts, nor incline our minds to the love and practice of holiness. The perfection and spirituality of God's commandments may (and will, if we be true believers) convince us of our own utter guilt and deficiency in every respect, and demonstrate sin to be *exceeding sinful* in His sight. But it can never make us, in the least degree, more holy, or inspire us with a single spiritual motive or affection. Thus we find, from experience, that the covenant of works is manifestly faulty or imperfect, not because of any thing wrong in itself, but solely on account of the corruption and depravity of our fallen nature.

But why, it may be asked, did the infinitely wise and just Jehovah make such a covenant at all with his fallen creatures? Does it not seem like weakness or fickleness on God's part, first to enter into an imperfect covenant with them, and afterwards to disannul it, and make a new one? The answer to this question, my Brethren, demands our gravest attention.

That which the Prophet Jeremiah, and the Apostle Paul so frequently allude to, under the name of the *new covenant*, is, in reality, the *first and oldest of all*, and only called the "new covenant" in reference to that later dispensation of

*grace in Jesus Christ, through whom it was fully revealed and confirmed to believers.* This was that “*hidden mystery ordained of God before the foundation of the world, but which was only made manifest in these latter ages,*” to us who sincerely believe in the crucified Saviour. This was that *eternal compact* entered into between the three adorable persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to elect, redeem, sanctify, and glorify a number of poor perishing creatures out of Adam’s guilty race; yea, such a number as, though *comparatively* small, should *positively* be so great, that “no tongue on earth could number it.”

Yes, my Beloved Brethren, in order rightly to understand the Scriptures, it is necessary to keep in mind that *that* which we commonly call the *New Testament*, or *new covenant*, is, in truth, the “*everlasting covenant*” which existed from the beginning of the world, between the persons of the incomprehensible Trinity—which was first obscurely intimated in the promise given immediately after the fall, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head”—which was still more plainly alluded to in the covenant entered into with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that “in their seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed”—which was expressly foretold, and in some measure explained, in various passages of the prophetic writings, too numerous to mention, (particularly in



those words of Jeremiah which have been already quoted,) and which was unequivocally revealed and fulfilled for us, in all its parts and conditions, by the incarnation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorification of the adorable Son of God, the "*second Adam,*" or *covenant head of His people*; who offered up His life as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and said to His disciples, "*This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.*" And all this is so plainly declared to us by the Apostle himself, in the 3d chap. of Galatians, 15th and following verses; that no language of mine could make it clearer.

"Brethren, (he says,) I speak after the manner of men, (in consideration of human infirmity,) though it be but a man's covenant, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises (of blessing) made. He saith not, and to seeds; as of many, but as of *one*—and to *thy* seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that *the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, (with Abraham,) the law* (of the ten commandments) *which was given* (through Moses to the Israelites) *four hundred and thirty years after*, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance (of blessing) be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Where-

fore then serveth the law? It was *added because of transgressions*, (to vindicate the holiness and justice of God, and to bring in the whole world guilty before Him,) until (Christ) the promised seed should come; and it was ordained (by the ministration) of angels, through the hands (of Moses) as a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of (only) one party, but God was only *one* (of the parties of the covenant of blessing present at the giving of the law; the Israelites, *as a nation*, were not a party concerned at all.) Was then the law (given through Moses to the Israelites) *against* the promises (of blessing, in Christ, covenanted between God and Abraham four hundred years before?) God forbid! *For if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily, righteousness would have been by the law."*

Thus we find, that so far from having reason to regard God as a weak or mutable being, we have, on the contrary, abundant cause to glorify Him for His everlasting truth and faithfulness, in the exact fulfilment of the original covenant of blessing, made between Him and His servant Abraham; and confirmed unto all believers in these *latter* ages, by the incarnation and atoning sufferings of His Son, Jesus Christ, who was, indeed, the promised seed of Abraham, after the flesh, and who "came to bless us by turning us away from our iniquities."  
 "This covenant hath He not broken, nor altered

the thing that had gone out of His lips." So far from the law, which was given to Israel, being opposed to the covenant of grace, previously made with the Patriarch, it was, on the contrary, intended to be subsidiary to it, like the scaffolding of a house, which is first erected, and then taken away when the building is completed.

The ceremonial law, as the Apostle declareth, was the "*pattern of good things to come*," it instructed the people in the important truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," and pointed out to them the necessity of a great atoning sacrifice, infinitely superior to that of bulls and of goats, which "could never take away sin." The moral law, also, was intended as "*a school-master to lead the spiritual worshippers to Christ*," by teaching them to feel how utterly unable they were, by their own exertions, to attain unto its perfect righteousness and spirituality. In both these respects, therefore, so far from being *opposed* to the old covenant of grace, the law may rather be regarded as forming an essential part of it. For "*the wages of sin is death*."—Christ, by dying for us, hath delivered us both from the power and curse of sin; and the law, by bringing us to a knowledge of our sins, teaches us to understand the inestimable value and preciousness of the sacrifice of the Son of God, thus dying for us, and making reconciliation for us with God. Herein,

therefore, are fulfilled the words of the Almighty, by the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, "This is the covenant I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least unto the greatest, for *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.*"

Hence we learn, my Beloved Brethren, that what the Apostle calls, in our text, the "*new or late covenant*," forms, in every respect, a perfect contrast, with what he terms the *first* or *old* one. For the old covenant (in his sense of the word) was a *covenant of works*;—according to it, salvation was to be purchased by our perfect obedience to the commandments of the law,—"*This do*," it said, "and thou shalt live." The new covenant is, on the contrary, a *covenant of grace*, or of *free unconditional mercy* to all that believe. God, for the sake of His dear Son, promises to be "*merciful to our unrighteousness, and to blot out our sins in His precious blood.*" And His language in it, is, "*Believe, and thou shalt be saved.*"

The first covenant was *weak*, through the ex-

ceeding sinfulness of our flesh, and could never justify us in the sight of God. The new covenant is *strong*, because it is founded on the *everlasting counsels and purposes of Jehovah*, confirmed, moreover, by an oath; and it has been fulfilled in all its conditions by His adorable Son, Jesus Christ, who, in the likeness of sinful flesh, “made Himself to be a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law,” and by His perfect obedience *unto death*, became the “end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth.”

“In the first covenant, God (with reverence be it spoken) is represented in the light of a severe taskmaster, saying to us, “*Thou shalt do, and thou shalt not do*,” and exacting from us the “utmost mite” of obedience, on pain of everlasting punishment; in this respect, the Apostle truly says, in the 4th chapter of the Galatians, that it “*gendereth to bondage*.” In the new covenant, He is represented as an affectionate Father, “God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, *not imputing our trespasses unto us*,” and saying, “I will do every thing for you, *I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely; I will blot out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee*.”

Thus, the old covenant was like a broken bond; it brought us in *debtors*, in every particular, to in-

finite justice and holiness. The new covenant is like a "merciful creditor," and "*frankly forgives us, since we have nothing to pay.*"

In the first covenant, the law of God was written with "*His finger,*" upon "two tables of stone," and by the bare letter or knowledge of it, can never make us holy. In the second covenant, God's law is written by *His Spirit* "on the fleshly table of the believer's heart," whereby he is sanctified, and brought into the way of obedience to His commandments. "I will put My laws," He says, "into their minds, and write them upon their hearts." And again, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, and I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me."

In the old covenant, Moses, the faithful servant of God was the mediator; but "*a greater than Moses*" is the Mediator of the new covenant, even Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of His own Godhead.* And for this cause is He the Mediator; because He yielded Himself to death, even the death of the cross, as the representative, or covenant-head, of His people, "bearing their sins in His own body," in order, that "*by means of death,* for the redemption of transgressions that are by the first covenant, they which are called (to believe in Him) might

receive the promised blessing, even an eternal inheritance."

Thus, while the old covenant was sealed "with the blood of bulls and of goats," which cannot make the worshipper perfect, as *pertaining to the conscience*—the new covenant is sealed with the blood of the Son of God; the Lamb slain (in the Divine decrees) from the foundation of the world, "whose blood cleanseth from all sin."

And, once more, the promises which the old covenant held out, were mostly of a carnal or temporal nature. It had respect, principally, to this present world; and afforded, comparatively, but a very obscure light respecting the prospects of believers in the world to come. But the promises which the new covenant holds out to believers, are spiritual and eternal. They have respect, not merely to this life, but also to that which is to come. They excite in our hearts the blessed hope, that "when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."

Seeing, then, my Beloved Brethren, that such is the essential difference between the two covenants; that which is called the "old covenant" of the law, and that which is called the "new covenant" of grace, or the Gospel—let us now seriously

ask ourselves, to which do we belong? Are we under the law, or under grace? In other words, Are we looking for acceptance with God, on account of our own *imperfect* obedience to His commandments, or acknowledging our transgressions, and discarding all dependance whatsoever upon our own works or merits—do we trust *entirely* to the blessed Saviour's perfect obedience unto death, for our redemption, or purchased deliverance, from the curse of our past transgressions, as well as for our free and final salvation? This, my Brethren, is a most important question, for many, it is to be feared, who have been baptized into the Christian religion, and who profess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, do yet cling to the old covenant of works, and depend, either in whole or in part, upon their own imperfect obedience for salvation. Thus, "*being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.*"

Let us, therefore, my Dear Brethren, beware, lest this be our case. If we belong to the covenant of the law, let us bear in mind the awful conditions it demands from us;—*perfect obedience—perfect righteousness*—"Whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all." If we belong to the covenant of grace, our "faith in the blessed Jesus is counted unto us for righteousness." And He hath for ever



"delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" but let us keep in mind, that we are "*not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.* - And let us shew the works of the law written upon our hearts, by studying to serve Him in newness of spirit, not in oldness of the letter." Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

## SERMON XVI.

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**PRAISING GOD—THE DUTY OF ALL MEN, BUT THE  
EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGE OF TRUE CHRISTIANS.**

**PSALM CXLVII. 1.**

*Praise ye the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing  
praises unto our God, for it is pleasant, and  
praise is comely.*

IN all our concerns, whether religious or secular, the intrinsic excellence of our actions is proportional to the excellence of the motive which prompts them, and of the object which they promote. And as *the glory of the Creator* is, beyond comparison, the noblest of all objects, the action which has this for its motive and end, must consequently be the most excellent that it is possible to conceive.

Now the act of praising God is one which, when it proceeds from a spiritual mind, has His glory alone both for its motive and end. It follows, therefore, that praise and thanksgiving must be the most excellent acts of worship we are capable

of rendering Him, though perhaps the most neglected both in our public discourses and private religious exercises. Let us then, in humble dependence upon Divine assistance, proceed to consider the subject of praise and thanksgiving; regarding it, first, in the light of a *duty*, and, secondly, of a *privilege*.

First, my Beloved Brethren, let us consider the employment of rendering praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God in the light of a *duty*. And that it is the paramount duty of every rational creature, is manifest from the words of David, in various passages of the book of Psalms, particularly that from which our text is taken. But in this, as in too many other instances, experience forcibly suggests the observation, that our duty and our practice are, for the most part, in direct opposition. The heart of fallen man is, we find, naturally cold and backward in offering up the spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to its Creator. For God, we are informed, is "a Spirit," and requires to be worshipped, not with the formal hypocritical service of our lips, but "in spirit and in truth." The homage which He justly expects from His rational creatures, consists not in those momentary feelings and expressions of gratitude which the experience of some undeserved mercy or remarkable providence occasionally calls forth, even from the most unthinking and ungodly. Nay, so far from

those common-place expressions of, "I thank God," or "God be praised," which frequently proceed from the lips of persons who are living in the habitual indulgence of evil passions and unholy tempers, being "*spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto Him*," "they must, on the contrary, be regarded as violations of the third commandment, direct profanations of His holy name; and bring to remembrance the words of Solomon, in the 15th chapter of Proverbs—"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord;" as also His own declaration respecting the rebellious Israelites, by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, "this people draweth nigh to Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me."

We learn from these words, my Brethren, that no praise, no service, no homage whatsoever offered unto God by an unconverted person, or by any professor of religion, who continues in the practice of allowed sin, is in the least degree pleasing, but, on the contrary, hateful and abominable in His sight. Therefore, in order that the praises and thanksgivings which we offer up may be accepted by Him, we should be sure that they proceed from a renewed heart, and that they are accompanied by a godly and consistent behaviour, "From the abundance of the heart," saith the blessed Jesus, "the mouth speaketh." When our

hearts have been so regenerate and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as to be animated with the love of God our Saviour, and with sincere devotion to His service, praise and thanksgiving will, in this case, be from time to time the spontaneous language of our lips, and we shall, like the Psalmist, *"be shewing forth His praise and telling of His salvation from day to day."* But as long as our hearts continue in their natural state of enmity, or alienation from God, under the dominion of unholy passions and tempers, "filled with the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of money, or the desires of other things," the language of praise can no more be expected from our lips, than harmony can be expected from an untuned instrument, or chiming from a clock that has no bell.

Hence we learn, that our *first* duty, as spiritual worshippers of Jehovah, is to beseech Him that the "words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, may be *always* acceptable in His sight, and that He would Himself of His infinite mercy, be pleased, by His spirit, to *"open our lips, that our mouths may shew forth His praise."*

Let us next proceed to consider some of the most cogent reasons that suggest themselves, why the *habitual* sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving should be considered as the *paramount* duty of every rational creature.

And first, The consideration of the goodness and

long-suffering of God, in preserving him *still alive*, and not having as yet cast him into the place of final punishment, furnishes continual cause for gratitude to every man living. Who is there among us that, on an impartial survey of his past life, and of his present character, is not obliged to confess, that he has grievously offended his Creator in thought, word, and deed, by "leaving undone the things he ought to have done, doing the things he ought not to have done, and thereby provoking His divine wrath and indignation against him?" Who is there (whose conscience is not completely seared up as it were with a hot iron) that is not compelled to acknowledge, that he has, more or less, "gone astray from his youth," and by his multiplied transgressions of omission and commission, rendered himself justly obnoxious to the penalty which the law of God pronounces upon all who offend it, even in a single point? Have not all of us, therefore, my Brethren, unspeakable and unceasing reason to bless His holy name, for having spared us so long—for having granted us such a lengthened reprieve—and instead of having long since issued forth the awful sentence, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground," having, on the contrary, afforded us, unworthy as we are, such time and opportunities for repentance and amendment?

When we seriously consider the subject, in this

point of view, surely there is no man amongst us, however wretched, or however sinful he may be, that can say with truth, "I have no cause for praise or gratitude to Almighty God." Is His gracious forbearance and long-suffering towards you no cause for thankfulness? Is the preservation of your mortal life, from day to day and from year to year, no cause for thankfulness? Have you not great reason to say of your God, as His servant David said of Him, that "*He has not dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you after your iniquities.*"

You have been visited, it may be, with some grievous tribulation of mind or body, which prevents you deriving that enjoyment from life which others experience. Be it so. However grievous the afflictions with which you are, or have been visited, you have still reason to say with the Psalmist, "*The Lord hath chastened and not rejected me, but He hath not given me over unto death.*"

The value of life, my Beloved Brethren, is too generally neither sufficiently considered nor duly appreciated. When we regard it as that brief portion of existence allotted to us, to prepare for eternity, it is absolutely invaluable. Truly does the blessed Jesus say, that "*the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment.*" And if we viewed the subject in the same light that the good

king Hezekiah did, we should be of this opinion, and would understand the force of that beautiful language he made use of in the thanksgiving which he offered up immediately after his recovery from sickness, "*The grave,*" he says, "*cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee, they that go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy truth, the living, the living, he shall praise Thee as I do this day.*"

And surely, my Brethren, we all have reason to unite our hearty praises with those of this pious monarch! For have not we also, in the course of our lives, experienced many similar recoveries from painful and dangerous illness? Have not we, too, been frequently delivered, like him, in a marvellous and unexpected manner from the very jaws of death? Have we not repeatedly beheld our neighbours and acquaintances cut off from the land of the living, and hurried, without warning, by some sudden and terrible stroke, into that bottomless pit of woe, on which the light of hope never dawns, and from which there is no return? Surely, then, we have all cause to adopt the language of the Apostle, and say, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom let us trust that He will yet deliver us.*"

Next to the preservation of our mortal existence,



the various blessings of life which the Lord permits us severally to enjoy, furnish us with still more abundant causes for heartfelt gratitude to Him who is "the Author and Giver of all good things." When we cast our eyes around us upon the condition of our afflicted brethren of the dust, and compare our own situation with theirs—When we reflect upon the countless multitudes who are doomed to pine away year after year, in helpless, hopeless, misery—When we remember what thousands there are, far more deserving than ourselves, whose life is indeed "a long disease," and who have no other prospect continually before their eyes, than that of lingering out a wretched existence in the most excruciating anguish of mind and body, which no human art can alleviate, nor imagination conceive—When in fancy we look through the dungeon bars, and see the solitary captive chained to his bed of straw, with despair painted upon his emaciated countenance—When we turn our thoughts to that house of woe, whose awful walls re-echo day and night to the screams of phrenzy or the frantic roar of madness—Or when we bend our cautious steps through the dark lanes and alleys of this great metropolis, and behold the innumerable swarms of human beings that inhabit them, destitute of every earthly comfort, whose bodies are perishing for lack of food, and their souls for lack of knowledge—I say, my Beloved

Brethren, when we thus call to remembrance the unspeakable evils, both natural and moral, with which sin has inundated the world, causing it to be indeed a "valley of Baeca, or weeping," to by far the greater part of our apostate race, and then compare our own situation with theirs, *does this comparison furnish us with no cause for gratitude to Almighty God?*

Are not the enjoyments of *light and liberty*, of *food and raiment*, of a *sound mind in a sound body*, invaluable blessings? Or if it has pleased our Creator to visit us with calamity, and to deprive us of some comforts which others possess, do not *those which still remain*, imperatively call for our loudest hallelujahs?

This, then, my Brethren, is the only way of correctly estimating our condition in the world. Not by thinking "how much worse off am I, or how much fewer comforts do I possess than my neighbours? But *how much better off am I than I deserve to be!* And how manifold more comforts do I enjoy, than thousands of my more deserving and afflicted fellow creatures?" I am persuaded that when we consider the subject in this point of view, there is not one of us who, on reviewing his past life, will not have unspeakable reason to set up his "Eben Ezer" of praise, and say with Samuel, "*hitherto hath the Lord helped me.*"

But while we must all acknowledge that we

have such inexpressible reason, to bless our long-suffering and bountiful God, "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;" our greatest cause for thankfulness still remains unmentioned. For, "*above all*" have we reason to magnify His holy name, for "His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for those means of grace, and that hope of glory," which He hath so abundantly provided for us in His dear Son's Gospel. This part of the subject, however, seems to belong more properly to the *second head* of our discourse, in which we proposed to treat of Praise and Thank-giving, not merely as the duty of all God's rational creatures, but still more especially as the privilege, *the exclusive privilege*, of His believing and obedient people, who are by faith made partakers in the blessings of redemption, through the merits and sufferings of Christ pacified. But yet, even according to this view of the subject, a general cause of thankfulness suggests itself to our minds, and that is, the fact, that we have been born in what is called a Christian and, still more, a *Protestant* country, where the religion of the Bible is the basis of the law of the land; that we have been permitted to sit under a Gospel ministry, and to hear the glad tidings of "*free salvation*" weekly proclaimed to us through faith in "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

I shall not, at present, detain your attention by suggesting a comparison between your condition as Britons, and that of those poor benighted heathens, who are born and die in countries on which the light of Gospel Truth has never dawned, and whose minds are, through ignorance and superstition, degraded to a level with the beasts that perish. I rather wish to observe, that the consideration of our many unspeakable advantages, in a religious point of view, may suggest to us reasons for profound humiliation, as well as for lively gratitude.

For, alas! my Beloved Brethren, how have we all, but some of us more especially, abused those advantages with which we have been favoured! How long have many amongst us neglected that word of life and salvation which our gracious God hath revealed unto us! How long have we resisted His grace, despised His forbearance, turned a deaf ear to the oft repeated warnings and admonitions of His faithful ministers, and obstinately persevered in a course of unbelief and ungodliness! Surely we must confess, in the language of Jeremiah, that it is "*of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed.*" But let us beware how we provoke this our long-suffering God, by our persevering unbelief and ingratitude, to "swear in His wrath that we shall never enter into His rest." "His Spirit doth not always strive with man." For

these many years He hath, by His Word and ordinances, been, as it were, "digging" about our souls—calling upon us to believe His Son's Gospel; repent, and turn from our iniquities. And if, notwithstanding, He still finds us unfruitful; without any evidences of true repentance, or of "faith, which worketh by love," what can we expect, except the fate of the barren fig tree—to be cast out as dry and unprofitable branches, fit only to be burned?

But if it be thus (in a sense) the privilege of the "many" who are outwardly "called" by the preaching of the Gospel, to praise the Lord; and be thankful for His mercies; much more is this the privilege of the "few" who are "chosen" through faith, to hear and obey the joyful sound. If the announcement of the Saviour's birth be as the angel declared, "Glad tidings of great joy unto all people," in how far more exalted a sense is it "glad tidings of great joy" to those who have grace to believe in that adorable Saviour that is preached to them? Yes, my Christian Brethren, the declaration that "God so loved the world as to send His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," is indeed glad tidings of great joy to all amongst us who sincerely believe it. And when we call to remembrance, the words of the adorable Son of God Himself, that "whosoever believeth

in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," and that "all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men," we are privileged to adopt the exulting language of the prophet Isaiah, in the 12th chapter, and say, "*Oh God I will praise Thee, for Thou wast angry with me, but now Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me :*" or that of David, in the 103d Psalm, "*Praise the Lord, Oh my soul, and all that is within me praise His Holy Name. Praise the Lord, Oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all mine iniquities, who healeth all my diseases, who redeemeth my life from destruction, who crowneth me with loving kindness and tender mercies.*" This, I say, is that "*new song of praise and blessing* which our God puts into the mouths" of all who believe His Son's Gospel.

The limits of a single Discourse would not be sufficient to admit of our enlarging upon all the various instances in which it is the believer's privilege to praise His covenant God and Saviour. For, in truth, my Brethren, were we able to live up to our privileges, were our faith strong enough to admit of our receiving that comfort from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which it is at all times, and under all circumstances, so abundantly capable of administering to us, our whole life-time would, in this case, be one continued season of grateful adoration and Holy rejoicing, and we

should be able to say with the Psalmist, "*I will praise the Lord at all times. His praise shall be continually in my mouth.*"

Let it suffice, therefore, to observe, that God, in the Gospel of Christ crucified, has provided a balm for all the wounds of a broken heart, a medicine for all the diseases of our sinful souls, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "His grace is at all times sufficient" for our security. "His strength is made perfect in our weakness." In a word, "He hath bought us unto Himself, with His own blood"—"none can pluck us out of His hands," and "all things are ordered by His over-ruling Providence, to work together for our good, both in time and to eternity."

It follows, therefore, that exactly in proportion to the strength of our faith in the Son of God, the clearness of our views of Divine Truth, and the depth of our experience of redeeming love, will be the abundance of our gratitude, the fervency of our zeal, and the liveliness of our praises. And exactly in proportion as these graces of faith, knowledge, and Christian experience, grow stronger and more confirmed in our souls, we shall be enabled, from time to time, to adopt the language of strong confidence and triumphant assurance, and to say with the Psalmist, "*Praise the Lord, O my soul, while I live will I praise the Lord.*"

yea, as long as I have my being will I sing praises unto my God :” or, again, “*Thou art my God, and I will thank Thee ; Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee.*” Thus it is, as the Psalmist says, that “*It well becometh the just to be thankful.*” And thus, therefore, we shall best evidence the sincerity and strength of our faith, and make it manifest that we are indeed amongst the number of that “chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people,” of whom it is declared, by the Apostle Peter, that they were elected and ordained for this very purpose, namely, “*to shew forth the praise of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light.*” As it is written again, in the 43d chapter of Isaiah, “*This people have I formed for Myself, saith the Lord, they shall shew forth My praise.*”

To conclude. The unspeakable blessedness of our privilege, my Christian Brethren, to offer continually the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to our reconciled God, in and through His beloved Son Christ Jesus, appears still more forcibly from the fact, that He himself is *glorified* by the grateful praises and adoration of His believing people. Thus the Lord is represented, in the 50th Psalm, as saying, by the mouth of His servant David, “*Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me.*” How it is that the honour of the infinitely glorious Jehovah can be augmented by



the praises of such vile creatures as we are, it is impossible for us to conjecture; further, at least, than as it is declared that the redemption of our souls, by the blood of Christ, is "*To the praise of the glory of His grace*, who has thus made us accepted in the beloved," and has perfected praise out of the mouths of those whose natural language is that of cursing and blasphemy.

But however this may be, one thing is certain, viz. that *praise is the native language of heaven*. The cherubim and seraphim that surround the thrones of grace, esteem it their highest honour and felicity, to be permitted to spend eternity in singing; "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth is full of Thy glory.*" And the spirits of just men made perfect delight in joining their angelic anthems, and "*cease not, day nor night,*" casting their crowns before the throne, and saying, "*Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.*"

Hence we learn that our best and surest preparation for heaven is, by spending a life of praise and thanksgiving on earth. The man whose heart and lips are strangers to the voice of grateful adoration, would be but a sorry companion for saints and angels. Nay, to such a man, heaven itself would be a hell. For how could he, who never takes pleasure in praising God on earth,

experience any happiness, or derive any gratification, from spending eternity in that holy place, where praise and blessing constitute the never-ceasing employment and felicity of its glorified inhabitants! Let this consideration then, my Dear Brethren, stir us up to diligent self-examination, whether we possess this indispensable requisite for admission into the glorious company of heaven, namely, *a heart attuned to the grateful praise and adoration of our God*; for if ever we expect to be admitted into the society of saints and angels, we must first of all have learned to bear our part in their celestial anthems. Let us, then, seriously endeavour and pray, that

“ Our hearts may thus in tune be found,  
Like David’s harp of solemn sound.”

Let us devote more of our time to this hallowed work of praise and thanksgiving, which is not only the employment most worthy of a rational creature, but also the noblest privilege of a regenerate soul: seeing that it exalts us far above the wretched vanities of this world, emulates the employment of angels themselves, and gives us at once a foretaste of heavenly felicity, and also a qualification for enjoying it.

Thus we learn the truth of David’s words in our text, that it is “ *a good thing to sing praises unto our God, yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to the redeemed soul to be thankful.*” And

hence we learn, moreover, that "it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, Oh Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God. Therefore with angels, and arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, let us laud and magnify His Holy Name evermore, praising Him, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth is full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, Oh Lord, Most High." Amen.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.

## SERMON XVII.

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### ON PERSEVERANCE IN PRIVATE AND SOCIAL PRAYER.

COLOSSIANS IV. 2.

*Continue in prayer —.*

THE importance and necessity of prayer, is a subject which occurs so repeatedly in the Apostolic writings, that it seems impossible for a minister to fulfil his office faithfully, without frequently calling the attention of his hearers to this first and greatest of Christian duties.

It might, indeed, almost, appear unnecessary to enlarge often upon a subject, which must be regarded as one that is continually uppermost in the mind of every sincere believer. Prayer, being, as a pious writer has truly called it, the “voice, or breath of faith;” the habitual practice of which, forms the grand characteristic of the really regenerate Christian, as distinguished from the mere nominal professor; it might seem to follow, as a

matter of course, that every true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will be diligent in obedience to his beloved Master's direction—to “watch and pray;” esteeming it, not merely as a duty, but also as a *privilege*, to approach frequently unto the throne of grace, and make known his requests before his Heavenly Father. And without doubt, when faith is in lively exercise, such are always the Christian's feelings and dispositions; and were faith *at all times* in lively exercise, exhortations and incitements to prayer, or any other of the Christian graces, would be unnecessary.

But, forasmuch, as unhappily universal experience testifies, that our faith is not always in lively exercise, nay, that it sometimes is so faint, as scarcely to seem in any exercise at all, it is for this reason most important, my Beloved Brethren, that our attention should be frequently roused to the consideration of the fact, that prayer is not only the *inseparable consequence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, but also *one of the means appointed by Divine Wisdom, for increasing and confirming it*. It is at once a grace in itself, and the source of all the other graces. It is not, therefore, merely when our faith is in lively exercise, and when our souls are of themselves inclined to prayer, that the necessity of it is to be enforced; but still more especially at those seasons of spiritual deadness and *apparent unbelief*—when grace seems

to languish, and the whole inward man waxes feeble—such, I repeat, are the very seasons in which the unspeakable importance and necessity of prayer should be most forcibly impressed upon our minds.

For this reason, I have selected the Apostle's direction to the Christians of Colosse—"Continue in prayer," as suggesting to us three very interesting and profitable subjects for meditation, viz. First, the necessity of "*continuing*" in the *spirit of prayer*; Secondly, of "*continuing*" in the *habit of prayer*; and Thirdly, of "*continuing*" in the *act of prayer*. May a blessing attend our meditations.

In the First place, I say, the words of the Apostle, in the text, suggest to us, my Christian Brethren, the necessity of "*continuing*" in the *spirit* of prayer; i.e. of cultivating and cherishing, by every means in our power, that holy, spiritual frame of mind, which manifests itself by frequent aspirations or breathings of the soul after God and heavenly things, and by a habitual "*drawing nigh*" to our Heavenly Father, not in *words* but in *heart*. This may properly be called the "*spirit of prayer*," because it seems to be the very essence or soul of the Christian's communion with God. "And as the body without the spirit is dead," so likewise all verbal forms of prayer which men repeat with their lips are dead and worthless, except so far as they

are quickened and animated by this life-giving spirit.

It may also be called the "*spirit of prayer*," because it protects from the renewing operations of God the Holy Ghost in our hearts, pouring out upon us that "*spirit of grace and supplication*" of which the Lord speaks in the 10th chapter of Zechariah, 10th verse, where He says, by the mouth of His prophet, "And I will pour upon the house of David; and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, (i. e. His church in general,) the *spirit of grace and of supplications*; and they shall *look upon Me whom they have pierced*." In these remarkable words, we see, that "*the spirit of grace*" is connected with that of *supplications*, or earnest prayers for mercy; from which we learn, that where the Lord is pleased to impart one, He always bestows the other along with it. We may judge, therefore, in what degree He has poured out upon us the "*spirit of grace*," by the frequency and fervency of our *spiritual supplications*; and if we experience no spirit of supplication, no hearty desire to pray at all, we have great reason to fear that we are in no degree partakers of the "*spirit of grace*." And the certain consequence of our having obtained this "*spirit of grace and supplication*" will be, that we shall "*look, with humble faith and penitence, upon that blessed Jesus, who was pierced for us on the tree of death*," and

whom, by our sins and unbelief, we have, as it were, "pierced or crucified afresh."

Again, the words of the Lord respecting His people, in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, verse 9, are very remarkable and applicable to our subject. Speaking of the manner in which He purposed to bring them back to Himself, from the error of their ways, He says, by the mouth of His inspired servant, "They shall come with *weeping*, and with *supplications* will I lead them;" thereby signifying, that the inseparable fruits of true repentance, and of that conversion of the sinner's heart to God, which is the work of His own regenerating Spirit, are, a *godly sorrowing* for sin, together, with frequent earnest petitions for forgiveness and acceptance. When we, therefore, my Beloved Brethren, experience within us this godly sorrowing for sin, accompanied with such a "spirit of supplication," as manifests itself by repeated cries of "God be merciful to me a sinner," "Lord save me, I perish," &c. we have a decisive evidence that the Lord is leading us back to Himself, in fulfilment of that promise delivered by the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, to which we have just adverted.

It is thus that "Ephraim," or the spiritual Israel, is prophetically represented as returning to God, after having for a long time been straying from Him in the ways of disobedience, "*Turn thou me,*" he says, "*and I shall be turned;* for



Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; (in amazement and consternation at the sins of which he had been guilty,) I was ashamed, (he adds,) yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

It was thus, also, that the wicked and idolatrous Manasseh manifested the sincerity of his repentance, during his captivity in Babylon; namely, by his deep humiliation before God; and the fervent prayers which he offered up to Him for pardon. For we read in the 38d chapter of 2d Chronicles, verse 12, that "*when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom.*"

And to mention but one instance more—the decisive proof which our Lord gave to Ananias of His servant Paul's conversion was, the spirit of prayer which was poured out upon him; "*Behold he prayeth.*"

It is manifest from all this, my Brethren, that nothing is more important, yea, indispensably necessary to our soul's eternal welfare, than that we should be possessed of this "spirit of supplication," which evidences the reality of our repentance, by

frequent fervent cries for mercy: therefore, whenever we are so happy as to experience this disposition to pray in our hearts, we should do all that lies in our power to encourage and *maintain* it; and be most careful to avoid every thing that tends in the least to check or counteract it, seeing that it is to be regarded as a precious evidence of the Lord's "good will" to our souls.

For this spirit of prayer differs from the outward act or form of prayer, inasmuch as it is a *secret disposition* of our hearts to seek for mercy and acceptance with our offended God. It proceeds immediately from a deep conviction of our own sinfulness, and consequent exposure to the Divine wrath, accompanied by a feeling of helplessness, and the indispensable necessity of our having an Almighty Saviour,—one who is able as well as willing to "save us to the uttermost," both from the guilt and the power of our iniquities.

Besides, it possesses this great advantage, that it can be *carried about with us, without inconvenience, whithersoever we go*. Even in places and circumstances where the *outward act* of prayer would be impossible, the *spirit* of supplication may be successfully maintained and exercised. It is not at all times, nor in all situations, that the Christian is able to "enter into his closet," or fall upon his knees, and offer up regular petitions to his heavenly Father; but there are no times nor

situations (*except such as are inconsistent with duty*) which preclude us from exercising the spirit of prayer, by offering up, *from our hearts*, short ejaculations and cries for Divine mercy and assistance. On 'change or in the counting-house—in the shop or at the market—in the field or on the road—in company, or in the darkness and solitude of night—in apparent safety, or in the midst of dangers and alarms, we may be sending forth, from time to time, such “out-goings of heart,” such silent but fervent petitions for help and protection, as, though unheeded by those around us, will yet make themselves heard and answered by Him, “unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid;” and who hath said, “*Ask and it shall be given you.*” So that in this sense, my Brethren, we may, indeed, be “*continually praying,*” without, perhaps, appearing to pray at all.

But, then, in order to be able thus “to continue in prayer,” we ought to be most careful, that we do not wilfully “*quench the Spirit,*” by indulging unholy thoughts or polluting imaginations; frequenting the society of carnal and unconverted persons, listening to their profane or unprofitable conversation, mingling with them in their festive meetings, or partaking in their unholy pleasures and amusements. To continue in the spirit of prayer at such places as the theatre, the card-table,

the ball-room, or the race-course, is utterly impossible; and those professing Christians who are in the habit of frequenting such places of fashionable dissipation, do not so much as pretend to obey the Apostle's directions of "continuing in prayer."

*Secondly*, The words of the Apostle, suggest to us, my Brethren, the necessity of *continuing in the habit of prayer*; by which, as distinguished from the *spirit*, I mean the *practice of setting apart certain stated seasons*, of every day and week, for the especial purpose of earnest prayer to Almighty God. Now the duty of doing this is so repeatedly set forth in the various Apostolic injunctions, to be "*instant in prayer*"—to "*watch unto prayer*"—"to *pray without ceasing*," and innumerable other passages of similar import, that it is unnecessary to do more than just call them to recollection; for no attentive reader of his Bible can, for a moment, doubt that the *habit of frequent prayer*, is one of the first and most indispensable duties of every real Christian.

But, if this be so, it may be asked, how comes it to pass, that prayer is so almost universally neglected by the vast majority of those who profess Christianity? Or if not neglected altogether, hurried over in that cold, formal, indifferent manner, which too plainly betrays the secret *unwillingness* with which it is performed at all? How comes it to pass, that of the vast multitudes who call themselves Christians, and who attend upon the outward

forms and ceremonies of religion, so very small a number can be found, who set apart stated seasons of every day and week, for the important business of "entering into their closets, and holding spiritual communion with their Father, who seeth in secret?"

The reason, my Beloved Brethren, of this almost total neglect of *private* prayer, by the greater part of the professing Christian community, is obvious. They have no *sincere faith* in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are not possessed of that "spirit of grace and supplication," which has been treated of in the foregoing part of the discourse. Their religion is a cold, speculative, heartless profession; a body without a soul—a shadow without a substance. They are not aware of their own guilt and danger, and therefore are not anxious to seek deliverance from it. They do not feel their own *need* of a Saviour, nor their constant dependance upon His mercy, and therefore have no sincere desire to pray for a continually fresh supply of it.

Prayer is, in fact, nothing more than the language of distress and necessity; it is the voice of one who is in want, craving for relief, or of one who is in danger, earnestly crying out for deliverance. The reason, therefore, why such numbers complain that they cannot *find words* to pray, is because they have not the hearts or dispositions to do so. They do not experience any *want* of spiritual blessings. They are in no *alarm* or *anxiety* respect-

ing the eternal welfare of their immortal souls. Their hearts are filled with the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of money, and the desires of other things, to the exclusion of every holy and heavenly aspiration. They hunger and thirst after the "meat that perisheth," but not after that which "endureth to everlasting life." In the words of Isaiah, "*The harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.*" And the secret language of their souls is, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him, or what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?"

It is for this reason, that such vast multitudes of professing Christians, are content to live in an *habitually prayerless state*. They do not so much as *pretend* to maintain the habit of prayer, either in private or in their families; or if they do, it is little more than "a solemn mockery of heaven"—a "drawing near unto God with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him;" and they eagerly catch at every trifling apology for discontinuing it altogether. But, surely, my Brethren, this is an awful condition for an immortal soul to be reduced to—thus, contentedly to live *without prayer*, and consequently, "without God in the world!" How can they expect the blessing or forgiveness of the Almighty, who do not even think it worth the

asking for? Or with what plausibility can they call themselves disciples of the Son of God, who thus allowedly live in the habitual neglect of one of His most positive commandments?

Let us then, my Dear Brethren in Christ, be diligent to cultivate and maintain a constant habit of prayer, both in our closets and in our families. Let us carefully set apart certain seasons (if possible three) of every day, for drawing near to our heavenly Father, and pouring out our souls before Him in humble supplication. Let us also be careful to maintain a habit of prayer in our families and households, by regularly assembling them, at the *most convenient* hour of every morning and evening, to implore the continuance of His divine blessing, as well as to thank Him for past favours. And, having once established this regular habit of private and social prayer, let us determine, with the Lord's help, that nothing (except *extreme necessity*) shall be permitted to interrupt or intrude upon it. Let us, in the first instance, select such seasons as are least liable to interruption. Let conscience determine how much of our time can with propriety be spared from other necessary avocations. And then, let no engagements or pretexts, either of business or of pleasure, prevent our steady perseverance in it.

In this way we shall most certainly experience unspeakable advantages accruing both to our souls

and bodies. For by diligently maintaining this constant habit of secret and domestic prayer, we shall soon derive pleasure from it, yea, find inexpressible comfort and *peace of mind* resulting from it. Habit, as it is said, quickly becomes second nature, and by continuing in the frequent practice of prayer, we soon begin to love it. Its *difficulty* and *irksomeness* gradually wear away, and it becomes, by degrees, not only easy but delightful, verifying the words of Solomon, that "The ways of heavenly wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and its paths the paths of peace."

In this way also, our souls shall abundantly prosper, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! There is no spiritual blessing which God can refuse to the fervent, persevering, prayer of faith. "If a son ask bread of his father, will he give him a stone; or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent; or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If we then, being evil, know how to give good things to our children, much more shall our Heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"

Yea, although for a long time the Saviour may seem to turn a deaf ear to our petitions, as He did to His servant Paul, who besought Him *thrice* before he obtained an answer, yet, in the end, He will certainly return a gracious reply. For, if even the unjust judge in the parable was at length



obliged to yield to the incessant importunity of the poor widow, who besought him to avenge her of her adversary, shall not God (says the blessed Jesus) hear and avenge his own elect, who "*cry unto Him day and night*?" Observe, my Brethren, our Lord sets it down as a distinguishing mark of God's "elect people," that they "*cry unto Him day and night*." Let us, then, prove that we are amongst that blessed number, by continuing instant in our habits of daily and nightly supplication. Ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, frequently devoted to this most hallowed exercise, would draw down unspeakable blessings upon ourselves, as well as others; and how many such short spaces of time might we find for it, if we were *anxious* and diligent to improve them, by *rising early*, and "*watching*" for every convenient opportunity!

Such habits of spiritual communion between our souls and their Heavenly Father, would also beget a *holy familiarity* with Him, and a confirmed *confidence* in His never failing love and good will toward us. In all our seasons of difficulty, distress, and danger, the practice of "spreading our case (like Hezekiah) before the Lord," and making known unto Him all our wants and fears, our sorrows and infirmities, would be attended with unspeakable consolation and security to us. And our experience of this would excite in us such a

hungering and thirsting after a closer communion with Him, that prayer would soon become as necessary to our souls as food to our bodies. We should look forward to the season of it, with as much eagerness as the hungry man looks forward to his meals, and we should find no more *want of words* in praying, than the starving wretch finds a want of words in begging for a supply to his bodily cravings.

Finally, By diligently maintaining this habit of constant prayer in our closets and families, we should certainly draw down the blessing of God upon our *temporal* concerns as well as our *spiritual*. "He *honoureth* them that honour Him." Yea, He directs us, "To seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all needful things shall be added unto us."

Let us, therefore, I repeat, be diligent and careful to *continue constant* in the habit of private and social prayer. Let us imitate the conduct of David and Daniel, who made it their unceasing practice to call upon the Lord in private prayer, three times in the day. "*Evening, and morning, and at noon,*" says the Psalmist, "*will I pray unto Thee, and cry aloud.*" Let us take Joshua for our model in this respect, who says (24th chapter of Joshua,) "As for me and *my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

"Do we want wisdom or counsel to direct us?"

*Let us ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."* "Do we want more faith, more love, more grace, more holiness, to delight more in God, to be stronger in Christ, to experience more peace, more comfort, more assurance of hope, more of the Divine blessing upon ourselves for those we love? *"In all these things by prayer and supplication let our requests be made known unto God."* Do we desire to lead a godly life—to pass through a peaceful death, and to enjoy a glorious resurrection? Let us then *continue constant and indefatigable in our habits of fervent prayer for these blessings.* Let us draw near continually, both with our lips and in our hearts, unto Him who is the fountain of living waters, "in whom *all fulness dwells,*" and who saith unto us, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "Call upon Me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." We learn from this, that if we do not enjoy the divine favour and blessing, the reason is because we do not think them worth the trouble of asking for—"Ye have not," saith the Apostle, "*because ye ask not.*"

Lastly, The Apostle's words in our text suggest to us the importance of "*continuing in the act of prayer.*" We all know, my Christian Brethren, from sad experience, how very difficult it frequently is to collect our wandering thoughts, and

*fix* our minds in prayer. There are, I suppose, few, if any, of the Lord's people, who are not obliged to confess, with grief and shame, that they too often feel, not merely a very great reluctance to pray, but even a decided inability to offer up any spiritual supplications whatsoever. The heart at times seems more than usually hard and carnal—the mind crowded with vain imaginations and unholy desires—the affections fixed on things below, not on things above, and the whole soul, like David's, "cleaving to the dust," in such a manner that the individual finds it impossible to offer up a single hearty petition, or holy aspiration, and for this reason is frequently tempted to rise from his knees and relinquish all attempts to pray, as useless, or even *sinful*.

Now it is precisely in such cases, or frames of mind as these, that the Apostle's direction to "*continue* in prayer," should be particularly attended to. Do we find a total inability and unwillingness to pray? Let us at least *continue to make the attempt*, and we shall certainly be successful in the end. Do we fear that our prayers are not answered? Let us *continue to pray*, and we shall ultimately obtain our wishes; for we are assured that "our Heavenly Father knoweth the things we have need of before we ask Him." Does Satan take the opportunity, when he finds us upon

our knees, to trouble and distract our minds with grievous temptations—with horrible and perhaps blasphemous suggestions? Let us *continue in prayer*, and we shall, without doubt, overcome him at last.

The very fact that the enemy does thus endeavour, by every means, to *keep us* from prayer, and to harass or terrify us when we are engaged in it, is a convincing proof how important and necessary a thing it is. In matters of more trifling concern he leaves us unmolested; but in *prayer* he exerts the utmost of his diabolical ingenuity to discourage and distract us—Why? Because he well knows that if we “*continue to pray*” we are lost to him for ever. For as sure as the promises of God are “yea, and Amen, in Christ Jesus,” so surely no “praying soul,” who is enabled by grace to persevere in habits of supplication to his life’s end, ever was, or ever will be, left under the power of Satan.

It is no wonder, therefore, that He who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour our souls, should rage and make his most furious assaults upon us when we are engaged in this “work of faith,” by which we are enabled to lay hold upon the everlasting covenant of God’s mercy. Nor is it any matter of surprise that our own hearts, which are naturally “deceitful above all

things and desperately wicked," should be decidedly averse to so holy and spiritual an employment.

Thus it was with Paul, "When I would do good," he says, "*evil* is present with me." And thus it is, more or less, with all the Lord's faithful people; when they desire to pray, their hearts are filled with evil imaginations, and "*they cannot do the things that they would.*" But let us be *aware of this*, and not be terrified or cast down on account of it. Let us not allow our adversary to succeed in driving us from our knees, or frightening us from prayer. "Resist the devil," saith St. James, "and he will flee from you; draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

Let us take encouragement also from the consideration, that though we cannot pray ourselves, yet the adorable Son of God is *praying for us*—that He stands for ever before the throne of grace as our great High Priest, interceding for us with His Father, and that it is His spirit within us which gives us the desire to pray at all, and "*maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*"

If, then, we cannot "continue to pray," let us continue to *groan*. Let us humbly cast ourselves upon the mercy of God the Saviour, as poor helpless creatures, who have no other resource. Let us cry to Him in the language of the disciples, "Lord,

*teach us to pray,*" Let us lay hold, as it were, upon the horns of the altar, and patiently "~~wait~~" for the outpouring of the Spirit, "teaching us to cry Abba, Father." Let us continue, in spite of all discouragements to offer up our feeble supplications before Him, saying, in the language of Jacob, "I will not let Thee go till Thou bless me." And we need not fear but that, sooner or later, we shall gain our point. The sorrowful sighings of our imprisoned souls shall yet come before Him—our hearts shall, ere long, burn with holy fervour; and, like the importunate Syrophenician, who *would not take a refusal*, we shall at length obtain the answer—Be it unto thee even as thou wilt! Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*

THE END.

